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AMY'S WISH

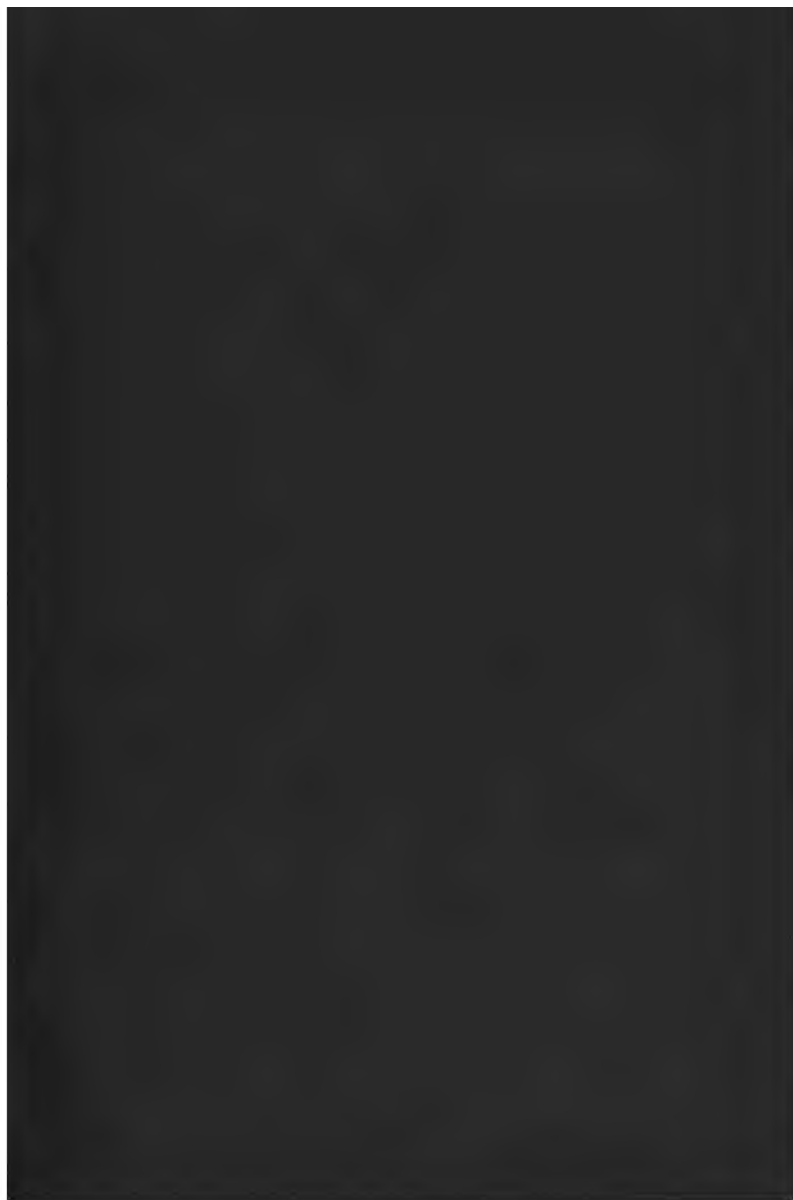
AND WHAT CAME OF IT



A FAIRY TALE



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In place of the Butterfly, a lovely little Fairy stood upon her hand.—Page 23.

the 1990s, the number of people in the United States who are 65 years of age or older is projected to increase from 20 million to 30 million, and the number of people 75 years of age or older is projected to increase from 10 million to 15 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996).

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**Abstract**

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AMY'S WISH  
AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

*A Fairy Tale.*

BY MRS. GEORGE TYLEE.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY G. WIGAND.*



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## AMY'S WISH.



### CHAPTER I.

#### AMY'S HOME.

**A**MY'S Home was a very pretty one. Situated in one of the prettiest parts of the pretty county of Kent, it stood in the midst of a large and beautiful garden, at the bottom of which flowed a sparkling stream. This stream bounded the garden on two sides, then running towards the west, babbled merrily over the stones down a steep and rocky glen. Beyond this glen might be seen a wide expanse of lovely country, terminating in a range of distant hills, and splendid were the sunsets the children delighted to watch behind these hills.

For Amy was not an only child. Her brother Hubert, a year younger, and her sister Clara, two years older than herself, with a baby brother number-



ing only three years, formed a merry little party for the Christmas festivities and the summer pic-nics their kind parents often gave them. These pic-nics took place sometimes in the glen, and at others in a beautiful wood, which, commencing near the house, stretched away for a couple of miles. It was the loveliest wood imaginable ; full of magnificent trees, thick copses, and sunny glades. One broad green path ran straight through the centre of it ; from this path radiated many smaller ones, penetrating to the thickest parts of the wood, while one led down to a rock where was a very pretty waterfall, supplied by the little river before mentioned.

Amy was a very happy child. Indeed, with parents so kind, and such a pleasant home, she possessed everything a child could wish for. Now and then, however, little clouds came over her happiness, brought there generally by some fault of her own. For though she was in general a good child, loving her mother so devotedly that obedience was almost the natural outpouring of her desire to please her, she was idle, hating anything like lessons or work ; and, moreover, she had a curious, restless little spirit, that was for ever neglecting the duty or the happiness of the present time, while she was wondering what would happen to-morrow, or longing to be anybody but herself, or imagining impossible pleasures. Her father called her his little Amy of the Golden Dreams, while

nurse gave her the homelier, but perhaps truer, title of Miss Scatter Brains. For ever she would be jumping up from her lessons, 'just to see what that noise was;' or 'who it could be that papa was speaking to in the garden;' or stopping in the middle of her reading to wish 'that she was the little girl mentioned in the story;' and then painting up in glowing terms the 'wonderful things she would do if she were.'

'One would think you were very unhappy, Amy, you are always wishing to be somebody else,' said her sister Clara to her one day.

'No I am not,' said Amy; 'I love you, and I love mamma and papa, and I should not like to be anybody else always, for anything, but I should like to try everything; it is so stupid to be always the same.'

'Ask mamma to let you be Cinderella to-morrow,' said Hubert, 'and then you could black our shoes, and we would give you as many kicks as you liked.'

'Oh! but that would only be playing at Cinderella,' said Amy scornfully; 'I should like to be the real thing. Only think to have a god-mother with a long silver wand, who with a touch could turn all your clothes into lovely silks, and bring a sparkling golden carriage to the door! Would not that be delicious?'

'And then, when twelve o'clock struck, to be all rags and tatters again, and to have to run for your

life! That would be the part of the fun I should like to see,' said Hubert, laughing.

'But I should change back again, and marry the Prince at last,' said Amy, 'and live in a palace always, and have no nasty lessons to do, nor this dreary hem to finish,' she said with a sigh, taking up her work, and throwing herself with a yawn on a chair by the window.

'Mamma,' said Amy, when her mother entered the room a little while afterwards, 'my birthday will soon be here, and I shall be ten years old.'

'Yes, my darling child,' said her mother, smiling. 'Are you wishing for the day to arrive very much?'

'Oh yes! mamma,' answered Amy with sparkling eyes, 'for then I shall be no longer a little girl, and you will trust me with something, give me something in charge, as you did Clara when she was ten years old.'

'Well Amy, I should like to do so,' said her mother; 'but then if I do, you must keep your thoughts and your wishes a little more at home, and not let every little thing turn you aside from the duty before you as you do now. Where were your thoughts wandering when you wrote "Princess" on your slate just now, instead of proving your sum?'

'Oh, mamma! we had been talking about Cinderella,' replied Amy laughing; 'I had been wishing I was her with her fairy god-mother. But really I have

been more attentive at my lessons lately ; I have had all good marks this week.'

'Yes, your lessons have been better done on the whole, certainly,' said her mother, smiling. 'But do you remember poor old Mrs. Evans's soup that you begged me to let you take to her last Wednesday?'

'Yes, mamma!' said Amy, colouring up. 'I know I was very careless. I didn't mean to forget it, but I put it down in the arbour just for a minute, because I wanted so to see what the gardener was doing at the pond, and then Hubert came and asked me to help him to move his rabbits from the old hutch into the new one, and when I told him I couldn't come, he said he only wanted me for a few minutes, and helping him put poor Evans's soup quite out of my head. And oh! mamma, I was so sorry when I heard she had been expecting it for her dinner, and had waited and waited till she couldn't eat anything.' And the tears came into Amy's eyes.

'Yes, my dear child,' said her mother kindly, 'I know you were very sorry; I know you did not mean to be unkind, and that it was from forgetfulness that you caused poor Evans to lose her dinner. Persons who have the habit of acting upon impulse are constantly forgetting things.'

'Yes, mamma, there was papa's nosegay you trusted me to put into his vase; I forgot that, but I

never thought that forgetting was a fault. I have always considered it a misfortune.'

'Just the same sort of misfortune as Rosamond's, when she pulled her cap-string into a knot, because she got up so late that she had to dress in a terrible hurry. Eh! Amy?' said her mother, laughing.

Amy laughed too, and, kissing her mother, said, 'Well, I never had such a "Day of Misfortunes" as Rosamond's. I think it is because I have got such a dear darling mother that she helps me out of my troubles, my "Sloughs of Despond," as Clara calls them, quicker.'

'The best thing is to try not to fall into sloughs of despond, and the way to do that is to examine carefully how you have come to get into them. Now with this matter of forgetting. Forgetting is no fault in itself, but it is often our own fault that causes us to forget. What was it that made you forget your papa's nosegay?'

Amy blushed, and in a low voice said, 'Yes, I know it was my own fault that I forgot. I saw a new book lying on papa's table, all about a little girl that had the most wonderful adventures; she went down a rabbit-hole, and sometimes she grew so tall she touched the ceiling, and then she grew so short again that her chin knocked against the floor. Oh! how I should like to be just like that little girl. And oh! there were such funny pictures; I could not help

putting the nosegay down to look at them, and the funny songs put the nosegay quite out of my head. It really was not my fault; I couldn't help forgetting it.'

'Suppose you had put the nosegay in first, and then looked at the book. "Duty first and pleasure afterwards," is an old proverb, and a very good one, my Amy. Not a long one or difficult to remember. Take it as your motto for the next month.'

'I will try, mamma,' said Amy; 'and you will trust me with something when my birthday comes?'

'Yes,' replied her mother, 'but it must depend upon yourself whether I can trust you fully, or whether I shall be obliged, while trusting you, to look after the thing myself. You will find it hard work to conquer your habit of giving way to every impulse, my dear child, but if you try you will succeed at last. And there is another proverb you will do well to take as your second motto: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."'

'Why, what is the use of that proverb to me, mamma? I haven't got any bird in the hand that I know of.'

'Have not you, my child? Think again; you have a happy home, kind parents, many little daily pleasures, and I think you often lose these "birds," and let them fly away from you, while you are wishing

to be Alice down the rabbit-hole, or Cinderella in her golden carriage.'

'Well, I never thought of that before,' said Amy, looking more thoughtful than was her wont. 'You see, mamma, I get tired of looking at the bird in my hand ; I get too accustomed to it to care for it much ; but those birds in the bush ; oh, they fly about and look so pretty, and are so hard to catch—so I am always wanting to catch them.'

'Well, Amy, you must try to check this, or some day you will catch some birds you don't like, perhaps. Besides, unless you conquer this habit, you will by degrees acquire a discontented spirit, and then you will be really unhappy.'

'Nurse, you will not have to call me Miss Scatter Brains much longer,' said Amy that night as she was going to bed.

'I am sure I am very glad of that, Miss Amy,' replied her nurse, 'for you do fly about so from one thing to another, there's no knowing where to catch you ; and then there's Master Hubert so impatient, he can't wait an instant for whatever he takes a fancy to, so that I'm often near at my wits' end between you.'

'Well, nurse dear, you needn't get to your wits' end any longer for me, for I am going to begin quite a new plan. I am going to do everything the very minute I am told, and then, you know it will be im-

possible to forget anything ; and I am going to stick to the present moment, and not to think of what may perhaps happen to-morrow.'

'Then I shall call you Miss Sticking Plaster,' shouted out Hubert from his bed in the next room. Amy answered this sally of her brother's by rushing to the door and flinging her shoe at him, while he ducked his head under the clothes, laughing. The scene would soon have ended in a regular romp, if nurse had not interfered, pulling Amy back into the nursery, and shutting the door upon her brother. 'Come, Miss Amy,' she said, 'you must go to bed now, and wait for your romp till to-morrow.' And Amy, whispering to herself, 'duty first and pleasure afterwards,' allowed herself to be led away more readily than usual.

Amy did try very hard ; but, poor child, she found it more difficult to cure these habitual faults than she at all expected. Still, on the whole, though she often failed, she gained many conquests, especially during the first fortnight. But if beginning to fight against a bad habit is a hard task, continuing the struggle is harder still ; and during the last fortnight her efforts relaxed, and she had so many stumbles that she began quite to despair. Two days before her birthday her father gave her a letter to post for him.

'Mind you don't put it in your pocket, my dear, or



you will forget it ; keep it in your hand till you get to the post,' was his last injunction.

Poor Amy, the village post was more than half a mile distant. She must keep the letter in her memory for a quarter of an hour. It was a hard task, but she had no misgivings about herself, and saying, with the utmost confidence, 'Oh yes, papa, I won't forget it, there is no fear of that,' she scampered down stairs to join nurse and little Arthur, who were waiting for her in the garden. 'Mamma, may we take Juno with us?' she asked, as she met her mother near the garden gate.

'Oh yes, Juno will be much obliged to you if you will give her another walk.'

'Now Juno,' said Amy as soon as they were in the road, 'I am Alice, and you are the baby that is to turn into a pig, so come along.' Now Juno was a very young dog, and as full of fun as Amy herself, and when Amy stooped to pick her up, she thought it meant a game of romps, and ran round her barking ; and at last when Amy had caught her, and she was fairly in her arms, she kept struggling about so that Amy could hardly hold her. 'That's because of the pepper, you poor little thing,' said Amy, and she began singing—

'I speak severely to my boy,  
I beat him when he sneezes,' etc.

but when she arrived at the chorus, 'Wow, wow,

wow,'—it was too much for any doggie's nerves, and Juno began barking and rolling about till she fairly rolled herself out of Amy's arms. 'Now, that's naughty, Juno, that's not like the little piggy in the book; you should go to sleep, and give one of your great grunts—you can do it very well if you like. Now, come and do it again;' and without thinking what she was doing, Amy, to have her hands free, popped her father's letter into her pocket.

Not once did the unfortunate letter come into her head during her walk, and when she returned home with nurse to tea at six o'clock, her father and mother were gone out to dinner, so the letter lay quietly in her pocket till the next morning. It might have remained there for a month, if no one had inquired about it, for Amy was so entirely absorbed in playing the part of Alice, setting the kitten up on the top of the drawers, and telling it to sit still and grin, and trying to play at croquet with her soft ball, and Juno as her mallet, that she had not a single thought left to give to the affairs of the present moment. But it was the day for a clean frock, and nurse, as was her custom, before putting away the soiled one, began emptying its pocket.

'Why, Miss Amy, what's this letter?' she inquired, holding it up.

'Oh, papa's letter!' exclaimed Amy, clasping her hands with a look of dismay. 'I was to have put it

in the post yesterday, and I forgot it. What will papa say to me ?'

'Well, Miss Amy, there's nothing for you to do but to go and tell your papa at once, because it may be of importance. What a pity you did not give it to me to carry. There, don't cry, dear, don't cry,' said the kind old nurse, who, though she scolded them sometimes, could not bear to see any of them in real trouble. 'Don't cry, very likely it won't be of any consequence.'

Poor Amy ran down stairs to the breakfast room, and rushing up to her father without speaking, burst into tears.

'What is it, my child ?' said her father, tenderly. Amy was quite unable to speak, but pushing the letter towards him, continued her sobs.

'There, there,' said her father, taking her on his knee, and wiping away the tears ; "tears never mend matters." There's another proverb to add to your list. Instead of crying, tell me how it was, and how it came you put it into your pocket.'

'I don't know,' sobbed Amy, shaking her head. 'I don't remember putting it there.'

'What were you playing at as you walked down the lane ?'

In spite of her grief, a smile crept over Amy's mouth as she replied, 'I was pretending to be Alice, and Juno was the little pig, and she wouldn't lie still, but rolled herself out of my arms.'

'Then I think Juno behaved exactly as she ought to have done, and imitated Alice's pig, who "doubled itself up, and straightened itself out again," admirably,' said her father, smiling too.

'But, papa, it was when I sung, "Wow, wow, wow," that she rolled herself right out of my arms.'

Mr. Selwyn went off into a fit of hearty laughter, in which Amy joined, much to Mrs. Selwyn's surprise, who had heard what had happened from nurse. When the laugh was finished, Amy said, 'But, papa, I am very sorry, though I could not help laughing.'

'Yes, my dear child, and I am very sorry too,' said her father; 'for though, fortunately, this letter is of no great consequence, it might have been, and so I shall not be able to trust you to be my little postman yet awhile.'

Amy's tears ran afresh at this thought. 'Oh! nobody will trust me,' she said; 'and to-morrow is my birthday, and mamma won't be able to trust me to do anything for her.'

'Yes, my dear child,' said her mother, 'so long as you go on trying to be worthy of trust, I shall give you something in charge. Of course, it will not be such an important thing as to be of consequence if you forget it. But don't despair. I have no doubt the day will come when we shall be able to trust you fully.'

'Thank you, my dearest mother,' said Amy, kissing

her mother. 'And, papa, that letter was really of no consequence, was it?'

'It was simply a letter of invitation to your two little friends, Emily and Mary Hill, to come to-morrow and spend the day with you.'

'Oh! I should like that so very much,' said Amy. 'Will it be too late now?'

'Yes, it is too late now, my dear,' said her father.

'Then, papa, I have punished only myself,' said Amy, with a look of relief.

'Not quite that,' said her father. 'We can never *only* punish ourselves. You have deprived your little friends of a pleasure also. But as they don't know of it, they are not conscious of the pleasure they have lost, so they will not fret over it.'

'Ah, yes!' said Amy sighing, 'I see; how difficult life is, papa.'

'Yes, dear, so difficult that it does not do to spend your time, as you are too apt to do, in pretending. Life is a real thing, full of very real actions, every one of which are of importance, not only to ourselves and our own happiness, but to all around us.'



## CHAPTER II.

### GATHERING STRAWBERRIES.

**P**APA is quite true in saying that life is a real thing, nurse,' said Amy, as she jumped out of bed the next morning, 'for to-day is my real birthday, full of ever so many real pleasures. There's a real whole holiday to begin with, and real presents ; and though mamma has not told us, I shouldn't wonder if we had our tea in the woods, and that will be another very real pleasure. I wouldn't be anyone else but myself to-day.'

'Well, Miss Amy, I am sure I wish you many happy returns of the day ; but now, do stand still a bit while I brush and plait your hair, or you'll never get down stairs at all to have any of these real pleasures you talk of.'

'Yes, nurse, I will ; but do you know why I don't like to stand still ? It is because, then, sorrowful thoughts come into my head ; one has come to me now just through standing still.'

'Dear me ! Miss Amy, I am very sorry for that ; but what sorrowful thoughts you can have to come, passes my understanding.'

'Why, nurse, I am so sorry that I shall not have Emily and Mary Hill to spend the day with me. It is all my own fault, and that's just the most sorrowful part of it ; they would have enjoyed it so much, and you see, nurse, it is I who have stopped their pleasure. That's a very real sorrowful thought, isn't it, nurse ?'

'Well, yes, I can't deny but it is, Miss'—

'But you need not let it make you sorrowful any longer, my dearest child,' said her mother, coming into the room at that moment, 'for, fortunately, your papa met their father out riding yesterday, and'—

'And papa asked them, and they are coming ? Oh ! how delicious,' exclaimed Amy, clapping her hands, and twirling herself round and round on one foot, while the plait of hair nurse had nearly finished came completely undone, and whirled wildly round with her.

'My dear child,' said her mother laughing, 'who would believe you were ten years old to-day, and you can't stand still long enough to have your hair finished ?'

'Oh ! I should like to be a bird,' said Amy, checking herself suddenly, and standing still again before her nurse. 'They have only just to pass their bills down their feathers, and they are dressed.'

‘Well, when you are a bird, we shall be content that you should do the same, but now, since you have the misfortune to be a little girl, you really must bear the troubles of dressing, and—of receiving presents too,’ added her mother, kissing her tenderly, as she put into her hands a beautiful new workbox.

‘Oh! mamma, how lovely! just the very thing I was wishing for too. Oh, why did you give it to me before my tiresome hair is finished. I must jump about, I am too joyful to stand still.’

‘There, there; the hair is finished, and you may jump about to your heart’s content, Miss Amy, while stupid old nurse goes about her business,’ said the nurse laughing.

‘But you are not stupid, nurse, nor old neither; and though you have wished me many happy returns of the day, you have never given me one kiss since I got up, you cross old thing, so now give me twenty; there’s a darling nurse,’ said Amy, throwing her arms round her nurse’s throat.

‘There, now, don’t smother me quite, Miss Amy,’ said nurse, as she caressed the glowing little face that was showering kisses upon her. ‘But see, my darling, do you think these little things are good enough to put into mamma’s beautiful workbox?’ And nurse displayed a needle-case, silk-holder, and pin-cushion, made of ticking, embroidered beautifully with coloured silk.



'Oh ! how pretty—look, mamma, won't they look beautiful in the box ? Oh, nurse, dear, thank you—I like your presents so very much.'

'Now, there is the breakfast-bell,' said her mother, 'and papa will be waiting for us.'

Amy skipped down the stairs to the breakfast-room. Here, as she had predicted, some more real presents and real pleasures presented themselves to her, modified only by two disappointments. One that the music-master from the town had come over that morning, so that Clara would be obliged to attend to her music for a couple of hours ; the other that Hubert could only obtain leave for a half-holiday.

'I think, mamma, I had better do some lessons myself,' said Amy in a sorrowful tone, 'for you know I can't bear playing alone.'

'You shall do as you like about it, my dear child ; but have you forgotten that I was to trust you to-day with something to do for me ?'

'Oh no !' said Amy, 'what is it ? That will be delightful. I shan't feel lonely if I am being trusted.'

'Well, I am going to make you my little fruit-gatherer ; I can trust you not to eat any while you are gathering it. Here is a new holland apron and sleeves, which I have made for you, as the insignia or mark of your office. And here are three little baskets, one to be filled with currants, another with gooseberries, and the third with strawberries. As your two

little friends are coming, we shall be a large party to-day, and you must fill each of the baskets as full as you can.'

'Thank you, dearest mamma,' said Amy. 'I think it is a very pretty office; and what a pretty apron,' she added, looking down at the new apron, which was tastefully trimmed with red braid.

'Shall we drink tea in the woods to-day, mamma?' she asked, looking up suddenly.

'We shall see by-and-by,' said her mother, looking rather mysterious. 'Papa has got some plan to propose for the afternoon's amusement, I fancy.'

"Business first, and pleasure afterwards," papa would say if he were here. So I will go and perform the duty of my new office,' said Amy, taking her baskets, and drawing herself up with an air of great importance.

'I am quite sure we shall have tea in the woods, because it's my birthday, and papa knows how much I have wished for it,' she said to herself, as she skipped across the lawn towards the kitchen-garden. 'I hope we shall boil our own kettle, as the gipsies do. I wonder whether the gardener has left the garden-door unlocked. Oh yes, all right,' she said, opening the door, which admitted her into a large well-stocked garden. 'Now, I must set to work at once. I have so much to do, I must not waste my time chattering. I think I will begin with the gooseberries, because

they are the most disagreeable to pick, they prick my fingers ; and then I will pick the currants, because they grow near the gooseberries. Oh dear ! I hope there won't be many caterpillars on the currant bushes. I can't bear caterpillars. I wonder why such pretty creatures as butterflies have to begin life as such ugly things as caterpillars ; and so fat and stupid too, doing nothing but eat, eat, all day.'

By this time she had reached the gooseberry bushes, and set herself diligently to her task. Soon she began talking to herself again : ' I shall put some leaves into the bottom of the basket, because mamma always does, but I shall choose the thinnest, that I may get in as much fruit as I possibly can.'

It took her longer than she expected to fill her two baskets ; partly because, instead of remaining steadily at one bush, she skipped about from one to another, that she might choose the largest gooseberries and the finest bunches of currants ; and partly that, when she began chattering to herself (which she was very fond of doing), she was very apt to leave off working. At last, however, both the baskets were filled, and covering them with leaves, she deposited them in a cool shady arbour.

' Now for the dear beautiful strawberries. I have kept them till the last, because they are the easiest to pick, and they smell so nice, and look so pretty.'

Amy scampered off to the walled fruit-garden,

where the strawberries grew on a bank sloping to the south. Just as she began to gather them, the thought struck her that she had better arrange them in her basket, as she had seen the market-women do, all in regular order, with their stalks downwards.

‘I will put them first into cabbage leaves, and then, when I have gathered enough, I can arrange them in my basket ; but I must make haste, or I shall not have finished by the time Clara and Hubert come.’

There were no cabbage leaves there, however, and to carry out her plan, she was obliged to run back to the kitchen-garden to fetch some. She came back hot and tired.

‘I will fill two first,’ she said to herself. ‘I am not sure that will be enough, but I am so tired, I shall be quite glad to sit down and rest, and then I can pick some more afterwards if I want them.’

Setting steadily to work, she had in a short time filled two of her leaves, and taking them and her basket with her, she seated herself on a turf walk which separated the strawberry bed from a bed of tulips.

‘There, this will be a lovely seat,’ she said, ‘with the strawberries smelling so sweet on one side, and the tulips looking so pretty on the other, and all the butterflies and bees flying about,—it is quite a fairy’s parlour.’

She took up her basket, and began arranging the strawberries.

'Dear me! how hot I am,' she exclaimed. 'I declare I feel quite sleepy. I must sing to keep myself awake.' She began —

'I'd be a butterfly, born in a bower.'

Yet, in spite of her singing, she every now and then nodded a little, for the heat made her feel more and more drowsy. She roused herself up, however, and finished arranging the contents of one leaf in her basket, and was just stretching out her hand for the other, when she saw flying towards the bed of tulips a beautiful peacock butterfly.

'Oh! what a beautiful butterfly!' she exclaimed. 'You happy little thing, you have nothing to do but to fly about from flower to flower all day long. Now do stop, you darling little creature, that I may look at you close, for you are the very prettiest butterfly I ever saw. I won't catch you. I only want to look at you.'

Whether the butterfly was tired with its flight, or was tempted by the sweet scent of the flowers, it stopped, and, poising itself a moment, dropped lightly on a beautiful white tulip. The next moment, as Amy bent forward to look at it, how it happened she could not tell, but she lost her balance, and fell into the bed of tulips. She seemed to fall a very, very long way; she was quite astonished how long the fall seemed to be, the tulip bed being, as she knew, so close to her. She was not hurt, however, and

jumping up immediately, she looked round for the butterfly.

Alas! there it was, poor little thing, lying helpless, with one wing crushed.

‘Oh, poor little butterfly! I am so sorry,’ sobbed poor Amy. ‘I am afraid I can never make you well again,’ and a tear dropped from her bright blue eyes upon the butterfly’s wing.

Suddenly the wings seemed to roll themselves up, the antennæ separated into tresses of lovely golden hair, the eyes grew small and intelligent, and in place of the butterfly a lovely little fairy stood upon her hand.

‘Thanks, my child; thanks for that precious tear. Condemned by the Queen of the Fairies, as a punishment for selfishness, to take the form of a butterfly, nothing but a human tear could restore me to my proper shape for seven years. Had you not shed that tear for me, I must have again turned into a wretched caterpillar, again passed weary days as a miserable grub. And now to reward you,’ continued the fairy, kissing the little hand which supported her, ‘the last wish you have uttered to-day shall be granted you.’

And before Amy had time to think what her last wish had been, she felt a strange thrill pass through her—a sort of dreamy feeling, not exactly unpleasant, only a little frightening. She seemed to herself as if she were fading away, going into nothing, growing

so light that her feet instinctively left the ground, and she found herself poised in the air; and when she tried to catch hold of the flower she was near, she perceived that her arms had turned into wings. She tried to speak to the fairy, to tell her she had not made up her mind what her last wish was, but the words only formed themselves in her thoughts, and then floated away out of her mouth, making no sound but an almost imperceptible quiver of the air. A faintness and langour crept over her, and she was compelled to settle upon a rose close to her to regain her strength.

As she stood thus, the sweet voice of the fairy sang close to her—

'Thou wouldst be a butterfly,  
Sweet little child of earth,  
Flitting about from flower to flower,  
Spending thy days in mirth.

Well, for the act of kindness  
That thou hast done to me,  
And for the tender loving tear  
By which thou sett'st me free,

I give thee what thou askest,  
And lovely thou shalt be;  
Hadst thou wish'd to be a fairy,  
Thou mightst have come with me.

To the Queen I would have led thee,  
And to the Fairy Land,  
I am sure she would have made thee  
The loveliest of her band.

But thou wouldst be a butterfly,  
I could not say thee nay,  
And now thy wish is granted, child,  
For one year and a day.

Yet even with the butterflies  
It is not always play,  
So call me—'

'Amy, Amy, where are you? I've such jolly news.'

It was Hubert's voice that Amy heard, as he bounded along the gravel walk, and his loud tones drowned the gentle voice of the fairy.

Amy tried to call out 'Hush, Hubert, listen,' but the words died away in the quivering of her wings. She strained her ears to hear, but only a word here and there could she catch.

'So call me—real—come,  
My name—ly—'

'We are to have our tea in the woods this afternoon,' continued Hubert; 'but where in the world have you hidden yourself, Amy?'

Again the silvery notes of the fairy song floated around her—

'And shouldst thou wish to make a change,  
Some—act—do,  
And higher, better thou shalt grow,  
And ever—too.'

'Amy, Amy, if you don't come directly, you can't go with us,' shouted Hubert again. 'It is so stupid of you to play at hiding. Why don't you come?'

'I daresay she has gone down to the pond in the



kitchen garden to pick some willow for our caterpillars,' said the gentle voice of his elder sister Clara, a little girl of twelve years old. 'I'll run and see.'

'Oh! stop Clara. Do look, what a lovely butterfly! I never saw anything so beautiful.'

'It is indeed,' said Clara. I do believe it is a Camberwell Beauty, the rarest English butterfly there is.'

'I'll fetch my net, and have it in a twinkling,' said Hubert, racing off towards the house.

Amy knew what this meant well enough. Being caught, suffocated with laurel leaves, and pinned in a box. The faintness she had at first felt was now all gone. The hot July sun, as she basked in its mid-day rays, seemed to pour life and strength into every nerve; she expanded and shut her wings with silent ecstasy, then rose lightly in the air, just resting over a honeysuckle to sip the sweet honey from its corolla, and then gaily flew over her sister's head, whispering to herself, 'Oh, how happy I am! who would not be a butterfly? This is pleasanter than any pic-nic.' And higher and higher she flew.

In the distance, far away, again the voice of the fairy came floating through the air—

'And ever lovelier too.

And shouldst thou wish to be a child,

Again at mother's knee,

Some kind—thou—one,

Who's—un—thee.'

‘Oh, I should like to be a child again, though it is very delicious to float about in this sweet air so easily—yet— Oh, I don’t like to be away from mamma. Oh, I wish I could hear all the fairy sings—I wish I had wished to be a fairy.’

Again Amy strained her ears to listen, but it was of no use; the fairy’s voice grew fainter and fainter, more and more distant. Once she caught the word ‘Lily;’ but now it seemed as if other voices were mingled with the voice of her own fairy; a chorus of such exquisite melody as she had never before imagined filled the air, and in tones sweeter than the nightingale came the words—

‘Welcome, welcome, dearest sister,  
Welcome back to our happy band,  
Swiftly we meet thee,  
Joyfully greet thee,  
And bear thee away to sweet Fairy Land.’


On a distant hill a rainbow had placed its foot, and down the brilliant pathway came dancing a thousand of the loveliest little figures, attired in robes of dazzling brightness, blue and green and burnished gold. And ever and anon one or other of them would stop to arrange their tresses, or to gaze upon their own sylph-like forms in a fainter rainbow, which served them as a mirror.

‘Ah,’ said Amy, ‘now I know what is the use of a rainbow; it is a pathway for the fairies to come from

the stars to the earth, and the double rainbow is their glass. I don't think mamma knows that, or my governess either ; but now I have seen it with my own eyes, so I know it must be true. I wonder, though, whether they are my own eyes, as they are a butterfly's? And then I have got so many of them, many more than when I was only a little girl. I suppose two of them are mine, because I had two, and all the rest belong to the butterfly. It is rather puzzling to know which is me myself, and which is it—but never mind, I won't think about it any more, it makes my poor butterfly head ache.'

All this time Amy was gazing at the gambols of the fairies, for she could not help seeing them even while she was thinking. She had such a multitude of eyes, that she could see herself, and see all the fairies, and all around her, without even the trouble of turning her head. And now all the fairies had collected in a cluster on a light silvery cloud, which they made brilliant with gold and green and lilac, till it looked like a large opal.

Amy's heart beat high with expectation and a little fear as the cloud began to float nearer to her. Suddenly it all vanished, the rainbows were gone, and there was nothing to be seen but a dark heavy cloud that at that moment covered the sun. Amy shivered, a piercing cold ran through her frame, as though a thousand wings were fanning her, and the following



words were sung close to her in a shrill whistling scream—

‘Lovers of mischief,  
Now all the Trolls come,  
The good little fairies  
Have hied away home.  
Would you escape them?  
Go back to your bower,  
Hide yourself, hide yourself,  
Safe in some flower.’

Terrified beyond measure, Amy lost no time in following the advice, and flew swiftly downwards to seek out some flower in which to nestle. For this purpose she selected the bed of tulips, whose large bell-shaped flowers she thought would just serve her for a safe hiding-place.

As she settled upon one of them, she heard her sister’s voice saying, ‘Oh, Hubert, look at that black cloud, I am sure it is going to rain, and we shall lose all our fun.’

‘Oh, nonsense! it won’t rain; don’t stand looking at the clouds, but come and help to catch the butterfly. Where is it gone to? I wish, instead of looking at the sky, and prophesying all sorts of evil, you had watched where that went to.’

‘It flew up so high,’ pleaded Clara, ‘that I quite lost sight of it.’

‘High!’ cried Hubert, ‘why, there it is close at your feet, on that tulip.’

The bright sunshine had again burst out in all its refulgence, and its rays betrayed the brilliant little

insect, as it stood, almost involuntarily opening and shutting its wings, enjoying the heat.

'Oh, the lovely little creature!' cried Clara, 'I can hardly bear to catch it, it looks so gay and happy.'

'No, and you shan't catch me,' laughed Amy to herself, 'but I must kiss you, my sweet sister,' and she flew up, and alighted on her sister's sunny curls.

'Stand still, Clara, it is on your head, and I'll have it in a moment,' said Hubert. But he was mistaken, little Amy was too quick for him. Off she flew; she entered into the fun with all her heart, and for the moment she forgot she was a butterfly, she forgot she could not speak, as she led her brother and sister a merry dance over the beds and the lawn, and up and down the garden, till she herself grew tired, and called to Hubert to stop one minute. She forgot he could not hear her voice, nor understand the quivering of her wings, and she felt angry with him when he almost flung the net over her head, and forced her, tired as she was, to fly up to the top of the garden wall out of his reach.

'My dear children, how hot you have made yourselves,' said the loving tones of their mother's voice, as she came up unperceived by the excited little hunters, 'what have you been doing?'

'Oh, mamma, look,' replied Hubert, 'it is the loveliest butterfly, and I almost caught it a minute ago. Oh, I hope it will not fly over the wall.'

And he drew his mother back, lest she should frighten it.

‘It is, indeed, beautiful, and a very rare one in England,’ said his mother; ‘but I have come to call you in, as your father says we must have dinner earlier than usual, or we shall not have time to reach that pretty glade in the wood, where we are to have our tea. I have just sent off John in the cart with the kettle and everything necessary to boil our own water; dinner will be ready in ten minutes, and you have no time to lose.’

‘Oh, mamma, wait five minutes, only five minutes,’ pleaded the eager Hubert, ‘it is coming down into the garden again.’ And his mother did wait, for she was herself surprised at the sight of a butterfly which had only once before been seen in England.

‘It is very curious,’ said Clara, ‘but it almost seems tame; if we keep quite quiet, I am sure it will come on your head, mamma, as it did on mine just now. Don’t let it see the net, Hubert.’

‘Nonsense,’ said Hubert, as if such a numskull as a butterfly had the sense to know what a net is for; why, if I had a candle in my hand, the little fool would fly straight into the flame, and burn its foolish little wings off.’ Nevertheless, he did lower the net, and Amy, who longed for one kiss of her mother, actually alighted on Mrs. Selwyn’s hand, which she had just stretched out to gather a geranium blossom.

'Dearest mother, I am your own little Amy,' whispered the child, but no voice came, no sound, only its antennæ moved, and its wings quivered tremulously; poor little thing, she felt as though her heart would break, she was so lonely.

'Oh, I wish I could make it quite tame,' said Clara.

'I wish I could catch it, that's worth a hundred tamings,' cried Hubert, darting forward net in hand,

'In thy troubles call on me,'

was faintly wafted on the air, as the instinct of self-preservation made Amy fly upwards, and Hubert's net was suddenly entangled in the rose-bush near them, blown there by the fairy, who was still keeping watch over her little benefactress. 'Away, away,' sang the fairy as she glided upwards on a sunbeam, passing so close to the ear of Amy's mother, that the words were wafted to her mind in the shape of a thought.

'Now, away, away children; see who can find Amy first, and bring her in. See, here is nurse coming to look after you all. In five minutes you must be ready for dinner.'

'I'll be bound for it, Miss Amy's got down to that nasty pond at the end of the shrubbery, picking water-cresses for the canary, or poking about after them ferns, and a pretty mess she'll be in. It'll be a wonder if she don't get drowned some day,' grumbled the nurse, as she followed the scampering children, who were making the garden ring with their shouts of 'Amy, Amy, where are you?'



## CHAPTER III.

### AMONG THE BUTTERFLIES.

**A**ND there stood Amy, unable to answer them, longing as she had never longed before, that she had arms to throw round them, and lips to kiss them, and a tongue to speak to them. Oh, how she hated her wings! Again the dark cloud covered the sun, and she felt so chilled, lonely, and desolate, that she flew down upon the net which Hubert had left on the ground, almost determining she would creep into it, and let him catch her, and kill her, and pin her on his board; she thought she could not be more miserable than she was.

But in a little while the sun burst out more brightly than ever, and as its rays shone down upon her, her spirits revived, her sorrowful thoughts melted away beneath its influence, and a thrill of keen delight passed through every nerve, as she stretched out her



wings, basking them in its golden beams. She flew up upon the nearest flower ; how delicious was its scent, how exquisite the taste of the honey-drop it contained ; the air was full of fairy music, while the sunshine played amongst the blossoms, arraying them in a thousand brilliant colours. The sense of life was joy to her, every movement of her wings was delicious, and she no longer felt lonely, for amongst the flowers were playing a number of lovely insects, and their voices made a gentle humming in the air. She experienced a strange light-heartedness ; no thought for the morrow, no fear of danger troubled her, and so gladsome was she, that as a little bird poured forth his melodious song, she joined in it by beating time with her wings.

At this moment a handsome and very gentlemanly-looking butterfly, who had alighted upon a flower a little above her, and had been gazing at her for some time with admiration in his eyes, approached her, and bowing profoundly, in a style which showed that he had always lived in the highest circles, and had never stooped to acquaintance with the common sort, addressed her thus :—

‘Lovely one, witness of your beauty and of the savage persecution to which it has exposed you from those raging, howling wild beasts that have now happily left this lovely garden, I come to congratulate you on your escape,’ and here he gently touched her

antennæ caressingly. 'My heart,' he continued, 'is melted with your beauty, and touched with your sorrows;' and the red spots on his plumage blushed a deeper red, as he added, 'Allow me to lay my wings at your feet. I am a foreigner, it is true, and only occasionally pay a visit to this cold island, but I am connected with the most ancient and aristocratic English families.'

'I wonder what aristocratic means,' thought Amy. I daresay it is something very nice; long words generally mean pleasant things, like excursions and pantomimes. I won't ask him, lest he should think me very ignorant.'

'I am first cousin,' continued her companion, 'to the Duke of Burgundy, and eldest son and heir to Earl Mancipium,' and here he erected his magnificent wings, and held up his antennæ very high.

Amy thought to herself that he was rather proud, but she did not say anything, for she could not help feeling very much pleased with the admiration of such a nobly-born butterfly. She had often wished to be a princess, and next to being a princess, she thought it would be very delightful to be an earl's daughter.

'In my beautiful country,' continued her companion, 'I can offer you a territory a thousand times more lovely than this, where the sun shines twice as brightly, and where the giant bipeds that inhabit it, instead of

hunting us and pinning us on boards, in the cruel way that I have heard they do in this country, have taken us and our children under their peculiar patronage, and have, for our benefit, organized a crusade against our most inveterate and dangerous enemies, the birds—those wily foes, first fascinating us with their songs, and then devouring us without mercy. Be my bride, come with me to France, dear lovely one, and you shall be safe from these dangers, and shall enjoy with me the glorious sunshine of that splendid land.'

Amy felt quite confused at this long harangue and intoxicated with its flattery. Indeed she did not think it was flattery, for her own eyes (of which she had 17,325)\* told her she was beautiful; she knew too (for the knowledge had come upon her suddenly and instinctively while he was speaking) that her rank was equal, nay superior, to his, for her family were a branch of the Lords Vanessa, first cousins to that famous emperor, who had pure purple blood in his veins. Nevertheless, she could not help feeling very much pleased with her companion's praise, for he was certainly very handsome, and there was something remarkably distinguished in his appearance. She longed very much to know his name, and replied blushing, and in a very timid voice, 'I have no doubt what you tell me is true, but you are a stranger to

\* Some butterflies have 34,650 lenses in their compound eyes.

me, and I—I am very young and inexperienced.' Then she stopped, for she felt very frightened, and did not know what to say next.

'Lovely creature, you are more and more charming,' said her companion. 'My name is Parnassus Apollo; and now, will you tell me what yours is?'

Amy was quite pleased when she heard this was his name, for she remembered having heard of Apollo before, and of Parnassus too, though she could not call to mind all about it, only she felt sure he must be descended from Grecian ancestors, and she thought too there must be some connexion between their families, as the Purple Emperor, her cousin, was a direct descendant from Iris, and she knew there was some connexion between Apollo and Iris.

But she got puzzled when she tried to think about it, so she wisely left off, and gently laying her antennæ upon his trunk, and modestly quivering her wings, she whispered,—

'My name, dearest Apollo, is Antiopa Vanessa, and I was very lonely till I met you.'

'Then be lonely no more, beloved. In one hour from this time we will be married. I must quit you for a short time, to make arrangements for our wedding, and to invite all our high-born friends amongst the insects to our butterflies' ball this evening. Meantime, I should not like to leave you amongst all this "common herd,"' and he pointed his trunk

contemptuously over his shoulder, towards a meanly-dressed Meadow Brown and some Cabbage butterflies that were passing by. 'I will take you, dearest, to the only spot in this garden fit for a high-born beauty.'

'Beauty is my pet name, I am always called Beauty,' said Amy, casting down her eyes; and the movement of so many lovely orbs made such a brilliant sparkling, that no wonder Apollo felt ravished. He caressed her gently with his antennæ, and then flew before her, stopping now and then to show her some peculiarly lovely flower, or to refresh her with a drop of nectar, till they came to a house entirely covered with glass, into which he led her, saying,—

'This house was evidently built expressly for us, to give as good a representation as possible of the deliciously hot climates to which all the best blood of the butterfly tribe belong.'

The domain into which he ushered her was certainly most lovely, and possessed everything a butterfly could desire. He led her to a splendid flower of a rich crimson colour, glistening with honey-drops, and next to it was another of a smaller and more delicate kind, of a yellow colour, and of a most exquisite fragrance. Indeed, the air was filled with the most beautiful scents, and innumerable gaily dressed insects were flying about, some humming in

the joy of their hearts, others chatting to their friends, and a few industrious bees gathering stores for their hives.

Amy felt very happy as Apollo bade her an affectionate adieu for an hour, when he promised to return, and make her his for ever—‘for emphemera,’—he called it, but Amy knew what he meant, and was not at all surprised that, being only a butterfly, he pronounced the word wrongly. She nestled down upon the flower, tasted a sip of honey-dew, and then amused herself listening to the scraps of conversation that caught her ear from the passers-by.

‘Lazy creatures ! these giddy butterflies,’ said a bee to a hornet he met ; ‘they seem to think they were made to do nothing but play, and show off their pretty wings.’—‘Perhaps they were,’ said the hornet ; ‘to my mind they are rather wise. I have heard it said that their wings are made in Fairy-land, on purpose to give pleasure by their beauty. One day, when I was near the gates of Fairy-land, I heard the fairies singing in praise of beauty, and this was their song :—

“Honey which human hearts can drink,  
Is better than the bees’, I think ;  
And though not stored in comb or hive,  
It helps to keep the world alive.”

So perhaps, friend bee, they are as useful in their way as you are in yours.’

'All very fine,' said the bee, contemptuously; 'but I should like to know how the world would go on if all of us acted on that principle. But I forgot,' she added, tossing her head, 'you are one of the slow coaches yourself.'

The hornet bristled up at this insulting speech, and as they passed on, Amy heard their voices buzzing loud and hoarse in contention.

'Do you know who that lady butterfly is?' said an elegant Fritillary to a superbly got up Red Admiral. 'She is quite a beauty, and exquisitely dressed; such rich velvet, and such gold fringe as that was never made in England.'

'She is a near relation of mine,' replied the old admiral, 'though I never have been introduced to her. They are a French branch of our family.'

'Could you not introduce yourself?' said the Fritillary; 'she looks very young and inexperienced, and as though a couple of elder friends, like ourselves, well connected and nobly born, would be of service to her.'

'Well,' said the old beau, 'if I can find some one to take in our cards; but my valet, Wall Brown, was insolent this morning, and I discharged him.'

'Oh,' said Lady Fritillary, 'I will send in our cards with my maid Ringlet,' and blowing a small silver horn, a plainly dressed but active little butterfly answered the summons. The old admiral and his companion both pulling a small feather from their

wings, sent them with their compliments to the Lady Vanessa, and asked permission to call upon her.

Now, as Amy had heard all their conversation, she was quite prepared what to do, and she had determined in her own mind to be very dignified. She was pleased at their praise of her beauty and her dress, but she was a little offended at their calling her inexperienced, and supposing she wanted their patronage; she was determined to let them know that she was soon to be married—that, in an hour's time, she would be the bride of a far handsomer and more aristocratic-looking bridegroom than that old fogey of an admiral would ever make; and he and his faded spinster friend would have to come to her for patronage then, and would be only too highly flattered to be asked to her ball. And besides, she thought to herself, I must be more experienced than they are, though they are old butterflies, and I am only a young one, because I have been a little girl, and I know all about—, but then she got quite confused, and could not tell what she did know. She had no more time to think about it now, as Ringlet at that instant knocked at the leaf next to her, which answered the purpose of a door. Amy felt very mortified that she had no maid to answer the door, and was a little angry with Apollo that he had neglected to provide her with an attendant. She was obliged



to say, 'Come in,' herself, which she did in such a very haughty way, that poor Ringlet felt quite snubbed, and flew back to her mistress as quickly as possible.

The old admiral made a profound bow as he approached to introduce himself and his companion, who said in a sweet gentle voice,—'It will be the greatest delight to me, if I can be of any use to you, dear Lady Vanessa. I have a most distinguished circle of friends who, I am sure, will be charmed to make your acquaintance, and it will be a real pleasure to chaperon such an elegant young creature as you are.'

'Thank you,' said Beauty, bridling up her head, 'but I do not need any introduction. I—I—I was going to say,' she added, casting down her eyes bashfully, 'that in an hour's time my friend, the Lord Apollo, will be here, to whom I am engaged, and I hope,' she said, looking up a little triumphantly, and yet shyly, 'you and the admiral will come to our ball to-night.'

Before the admiral or Lady Fritillary could answer, they were all startled by a curious noise that seemed approaching them, and as they simultaneously looked round to discover the cause, a shower of water dashed over them. 'Oh! my best clothes,' exclaimed the old admiral, and not staying to see if he could help his lady friends, off he was like a shot. The

Lady Fritillary's breath was almost taken away as the water splashed into her face, and just gasping out, 'Fly for your life, my dear ! fly for your life !' she too flew off, without stopping to show poor Beauty which way she ought to fly.

Amy could not help laughing at her companions' fright, especially at the hurried undignified exit of the old admiral. But her merriment was soon cut short by fear for her own wedding-dress, for Apollo would not like to have a dripping wet bride. So she flew to a tree fern, the leaves of which were so large that they were like umbrellas. 'I wonder where Lady Fritillary has gone,' thought she ; 'if she had once been a little girl, she would have known that an umbrella is the proper thing to shelter one from rain ; but, poor thing, she is only a butterfly, and, of course, she is stupid,' and Amy peeped out to see if she or the admiral were anywhere in sight. To her astonishment, not a trace could she perceive of any one of the busy, happy, bright little insects that, only a minute before, had been fluttering and buzzing around her. She was alone, and no sound except the pattering of the rain upon the leaves, and the splashing of the water on the ground, broke the stillness. While she was still congratulating herself upon her wisdom, and pitying the folly of her companions, the direction of the shower suddenly changed, and came from below upwards.

'Dear me !' she said, shaking the wet drops off her delicate velvet shoes, 'how curious ! I never knew it rain upwards before. When I was a little girl the rain always came down from the sky—what a strange way of raining ! It's no use talking about it though, and there's no time to find out the reason of it, I must get out of its way. I'll try by getting on the top of the leaf, and then I shall have an umbrella under my feet.' When she got there, however, she found the leaf quite a little pool of water, and even if she kept herself poised above it by her wings, which was very fatiguing, all the branches above her head kept dripping upon her. 'Hubert would call me cowardly to run away,' she said, 'but I can't help it, I can't stop here and get wet through. I will fly up to the top of the hothouse, the rain will not reach me there.'

'There's one o' them vicious flies, as spiles my best flowers, by laying o' their heggs on 'em,' said a gruff voice ; 'but I'll spile your sport ma'am this time tho' you be a beauty, and no mistake.' And immediately a long serpent-looking body, with a large head, having an immense number of small round mouths, came rapidly towards her, spitting out water as it approached.

'Oh, John, don't you know you are wetting your little favourite, as you often call me ?' said Amy.

But John did not hear her, and only grinned as his relentless shower chased her from place to place, till at last she was only too glad to find a hole in a pane of broken glass, through which to make her escape into the open air.





## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CHASE.

**B**MY flew on to the wall close to the hot-house, and stopped there to rest, and to dry herself in the sunshine.

‘After all, it has not done me much harm,’ she said, ‘my wings will soon be dry—they are nearly dry already. It is very pleasant out here, basking in the sunshine, and sheltered from the wind by this large tree. Oh, how beautifully the birds are singing, especially that one in the black velvet pelisse. I think he must be singing on purpose to please me ; he has hopped down two or three branches nearer since I have been here. I must say, I think Apollo made some very ill-natured remarks about the birds.’

The blackbird hopped closer to her, and Beauty spread out her wings, and prepared herself to receive an admiring salutation, when, suddenly ceasing his song, he made a dash at her with open beak.

Poor little Beauty flew off swift as an arrow—the bird followed her ; ‘ I’ll catch you,’ she heard him mutter ; ‘ you will be a delicious morsel for one of my little ones ;’ and then began a headlong chase.

It had been easy enough to distance her brother and sister ; they had only legs, but this new enemy had wings, and wings vastly stronger than her own. For one moment she thought all was over with her, and was almost ready to give up in despair, when the idea struck her, that she might baffle her pursuer by stratagem. She perceived that he flew always in a straight line towards her, and that hitherto she had escaped him by taking short eccentric flights, first to the right hand, and then to the left. She determined to adopt this method, therefore, not troubling herself to fly quickly, but pursuing a continual zig-zag, which completely puzzled her foe.

But Amy was getting very tired, and could hardly keep herself up at all, and she began anxiously to look about for some hiding-place. In order to do this she doubled back upon her flight, and getting behind the bird, dropped down upon the grass close by a large dock leaf, under which she hid herself. Amy crouched closely under the leaf, and through a small hole watched her enemy as he flew backwards and forwards in search of her ; and she laughed to see how disappointed and angry he looked. Presently he settled upon the hedge very near her, and she was

so afraid that he might hop down lower, or that the wind might blow up the leaf and discover her, that she crept into a little inner chamber, formed by two neighbouring leaves. Here she felt quite secure, and was so delightfully snug and warm, that she nestled down upon the leaf, folded her wings, and fell into a pleasant doze, for she was excessively tired.

How long she had slept she did not know ; but she was waked up with a start by a cold wind blowing upon her, making her shiver, accompanied by a loud terrifying noise, a sort of rushing and grinding mingled together. She darted in all haste out of her little leafy bedroom, and not one instant too soon, for the next moment a great red avalanche swept over it, and not a trace of it was left, only one end of her pretty green curtains was hanging out of the mouth of a large cow, who was slowly demolishing it.

Beauty shuddered when she thought what would have been her fate if she had been less nimble in making her escape, and she congratulated herself, with no little self-complacency, upon the choice she had made of wings. She soon recovered from the shock which this sudden awakening and escape from imminent danger had caused her. For though the cow, in comparison with herself, was a very huge animal, yet she appeared very gentle, and had evidently no wish to do her any harm ; indeed, so gentle did she look, that Beauty, suddenly remembering the

blackbird, flew upon her back, thinking that no bird would dare to attack her there. She need have been under no apprehension, however, for the blackbird had flown away long ago to his little ones in the large tree with a fat caterpillar in his beak.

Beauty now thought of Apollo and her wedding, and began to wonder what o'clock it was, and to fear that her nap must have lasted a long time. At last she ventured in a timid voice to ask the cow if she knew the hour.

The cow lifted up her head, and looked gravely round the field ; though how that could help her to find out the time Amy could not imagine.

'It is just three o'clock,' said the cow.

'Three o'clock !' said Beauty in dismay ; 'and my wedding was to have been at two ! What shall I do ? Apollo will think me faithless ; he will think I have gone away on purpose. But perhaps you are mistaken ; how do you know ? You only looked round the field, and how can that tell you the hour ?'

The cow smiled, and lifting up her fore-foot, pointed to the white pappus of some dandelions not far off. A gentle breeze had just risen, and Amy remarked that from each dandelion head flew three feathery plumes of white down, and floated away over the grass.

'Those are our field clocks,' said the cow ; 'every hour the fairy Zephyr passes over the fields and strikes the hours upon the dandelions. But you had



better waste no more time ; I am afraid you are but a giddy young thing,' and again the cow smiled ; 'still there is not much harm done yet ; if your bridegroom is good for anything, he will have waited for you one hour, but it is not wise to try his patience too long.'

'Good-bye then, dear cow,' said Amy, 'and thank you for your kind advice. I have not time to stop now and explain to you that it is not my fault that I am here ; I have had such a day of misfortunes. Next time I meet you I will tell you all about it ; good-bye now.'

Beauty flew away in the direction she believed she had come when chased by the blackbird ; but after flying over two hedges, an unpleasant consciousness came over her, that she had lost her way.

In the peril of her former flight she had no time or thought to notice any of the smaller features of the road she had come. She remembered passing over one hedge, perhaps two, and she fancied she had once flown over a gate ; but then, in the zig-zag course she had taken, several times doubling back upon her steps in order to elude her pursuer, she ought not, she thought, to be far from the hot-house. But if so, where was it ? Where was the wall from which she started ? Where was the large tree ? She flew high up into the air and gazed around. She could see nothing but a bewildering maze of fields and hedges.

There was a Meadow Brown flying near the hedge; she would inquire of him.

‘He had never heard of a glass house,’ he said; ‘did not know what it meant; except, indeed, the glass case which the fairy made for Prince Boohoo, when he cried because he could not have strawberries all the year round, and screwed him down under it over the strawberry bed for a year, but that was a long, long way off. And as to a wall; well, there were several walls in the neighbourhood, though none very near; and which did her ladyship want? And as to the large tree, there was one out there,’ said he, pointing to the west, ‘and another out there, about a mile off,’ pointing to the south, ‘and quite a number of large trees in the opposite direction,’ pointing to the north. Then he bowed, said ‘he was very sorry he could not stay to help her; but he was field postman on duty that day, and he must be off immediately, as he had many letters to deliver before sunset.’

Poor Amy felt ready to cry, but she determined to be brave, and a new idea coming into her head at that moment, helped her to keep her resolution. She remembered that, when she left the wall, the sun was in her back, so she thought, ‘If I keep the sun in my face now, I must come to the glass house at last.’ She forgot the queer gyrations she had made when escaping from her pursuer.

Confident in this new thought, she set off again

straight towards the west with renewed vigour. She flew on for some time, passing over two or three hedges, till at last she saw not far from her a large tree ; her heart jumped into her mouth. 'What if the black-bird should be there on the look-out for her?' She would fly cautiously ; she would take a circuit round the tree, and so contrive to get the hot-house and the wall between her and it. Flying over the next hedge, she found herself in a high-road. Again she hesitated, there was no road near the tree she was in search of. Perhaps there was, only in her fright she had not observed it. Another hedge, and then another field ; she was very near the tree now ; only one more hedge, and there indeed was a large tree, but instead of a wall, it was standing by the side of a beautiful river.

And now Amy's courage fairly gave way ; she sunk down upon the grass, and burst into tears. And oh ! how those tears oppressed her. She could not weep them out ; they were in her heart, and obliged to stay there, and her heart got fuller and fuller, and heavier and heavier, till it seemed as though her poor little fragile body would burst with her grief.

'Oh, the cruel fairy ! the cruel fairy ! why did she turn me into a butterfly ? What is the use of these hateful wings ? Nothing but trouble befalls me ! What shall I do ? Oh ! what shall I do ?'

Then angry thoughts came into her mind ; 'Why

had she done the fairy a kindness? She would never do any kind act again. Why should everything chase her? Why was no one kind to her? She would fly into the river and drown herself, and then she hoped the Queen of the Fairies would hear about it, and would punish the cruel fairy. She only wished she knew her name, and then she would wait for Zephyr, and send a message by him to Fairy-land, and ask the Queen to punish her.' And as all these angry impatient thoughts passed through her mind, her heart grew still heavier and heavier, and her head sunk lower in the grass.

If she had not been too sorrowful to look up, she would have seen that she was not alone. Sweet little Zephyr was floating towards her, teaching all the field clocks to fly upwards as they told the hour of four. When he saw her lying there so sadly on the grass his gentle little heart pitied her, and he stopped a moment to see if perchance he could comfort her. He encircled her soothingly in his arms, kissed her lovingly, smoothed down softly the ruffled feathers of her wings, and gently whispered, 'Fly upwards, little one, like the feather down, and joys will grow again.' He passed on to finish his work, and Amy, looking up quickly, just caught his bright sunny smile before he disappeared, and more loving, hopeful thoughts came into her mind. As she gazed upwards she fancied she saw a sylph-like figure sliding down a

golden sunbeam, and from afar came the same lovely voice she had heard in the garden, singing—

‘ But even with the butterflies  
It is not always play ;  
So call me when real troubles come,  
My name is Lily Fay.’

‘ Real troubles have come to me now, Lily Fay, and, indeed, you ought to come and help me out of them, for it was your fault. If you had given me time to think, I should not have wished to be such a helpless thing as a butterfly.’

These were rather impatient words, and as she spoke them the slight breeze passed away with a melancholy wail among the trees, a cloud obscured the sun, and Amy felt a rain-drop fall upon her. Perhaps it was Zephyr weeping because he could not persuade her to be patient and gentle.

But now a sight met Amy's eyes that quite chased away for the time all thoughts of herself, and dispelled all her heavy-heartedness. Looking towards the river, she saw, seated on a green leaf, the loveliest little maiden she ever beheld. She was only an inch high, and exquisitely formed. She was alone, and singing to herself in the softest, most melodious voice. ‘ Oh ! what a lovely little creature !’ said Amy, and she flew towards her. She flew round the leaf several times before she ventured nearer ; but at last, encouraged by the sweet looks and bright smile of the little maiden, she settled upon it.



A great ugly Toad had come and stolen her away.—*Page 3.*



The little girl appeared as pleased as herself at having found a companion, and entered readily into conversation with Amy. She told her her name was Ellise, and that a great misfortune had happened to her, by which she had been cast thus alone on the world. She had once had a happy home with a kind young woman, who had made her a beautiful cradle out of a walnut shell, and had given her all she could desire, till one day, when she was asleep, a great ugly toad had come and stolen her away, as he wanted her for a wife to his son. He had placed her on this leaf, which was fastened to the bottom of the river, but some kind little fishes had come to her help, and had nibbled the stalk which held the leaf fast, and she had sailed far away from the ugly toad.

Then Amy told Ellise her adventures, and when Ellise heard that she had once been a little girl, she loved her more than ever.

And now they travelled on merrily together. Sometimes Ellise would sing a song, and then Beauty would dance a Scotch reel in the air. Once their tiny bark drifted amongst some water-lilies, and they landed and had a famous game at hide-and-seek among the leaves. But here they nearly got into trouble, for the current that had taken their leaf amongst the lilies gradually took it out again, and it was only by a very long leap, and holding the leg of the butterfly to help her, that Ellise managed to get



back upon her little boat before it began drifting down the stream again. They went on for a long time, sometimes watching the surface of the water sparkling like gold in the sunshine, sometimes resting quietly, side by side, gazing at the beautiful country which they were passing, and sometimes little Ellise would dip her hand into the water, and try merrily to sprinkle Beauty with the silvery drops, and then a pretty sport began, and Beauty would flit backwards and forwards, till at last, tired out and hot, she would settle lovingly on Ellise's golden curls, and shade her from the too great heat of the sun.

At last Ellise proposed to tie one end of her sash round the butterfly, and the other to the leaf, so that they might glide on more rapidly, and that, as it was getting near sunset, Beauty might look out for some pleasant spot where they might land their leafy boat, and seek shelter for the night. Beauty was delighted with the idea, and merrily flew away, making the green leaf sail down the river at such a rapid rate that some gold fish they passed called out, 'Take care, little maiden, or your charioteer will upset you. You will not like the water as much as we do.'

But, alas! their fun was brought to an untimely end, for a large cockchafer chanced to espy little Ellise, and was so charmed with her loveliness that he pounced upon her, and seizing her round her slender waist, flew off with her into a tree. As she

was thus violently carried away, Amy heard her cry out, 'Oh! my darling little butterfly, I am so grieved that I tied you to the leaf, for you cannot unfasten yourself, and you will be starved to death.' In the midst of her own terror, her first thought was given to the danger she had been the means of bringing upon her friend.

Beauty was, indeed, in a sad plight. She tried to draw the leaf towards the shore, but the current was so rapid, that it floated for some distance down the stream before she could succeed in doing this, and when at last she had accomplished her object, she found to her dismay that all her efforts to disentangle herself from Ellise's sash were futile. She only tore one of her wings sadly in her impatient attempts.





## CHAPTER V.

### SYLPHINA.

**W**HEN Beauty found her own efforts to release herself of no avail, she stopped trying, and looked round to see if there was any one able to help her. Not a creature was in sight. There was one comfort in this, for if there was no one to help her, there was no one either to hurt her.

The sun was fast sinking in the west, and its setting rays were gilding a scene of great beauty. A few feet from her was a bed of foxgloves waving their beautiful heads in the evening breeze—behind them a large expanse of golden gorse and purple heather. On the opposite side was a cool and pleasant-looking copse of thorn and hazel bushes, jewelled over with wild roses, honeysuckle, and convolvulus, and intermingled with clumps of lime-trees, scenting the air with their fragrant blossoms, and groups of the elegant

drooping birch, stately elms, and spreading oaks. Bounding the scene were two lofty wood-crowned hills, clothed with fir and pine, and between them in the far distance could be caught a glimpse of the boundless sea.

How musical were the voices of the trees as their rustling leaves talked together, or whispered greetings to the sunbeams that came rippling through their branches. Amy almost forgot her troubles as she listened to their grave and gentle utterances—the soft delicate tones of the waving birch leaves, the grave sonorous responses of the oaks, and the mysterious whispers of the elms mingling in sweetest harmony, varied by the dancing voice of the river frolicking saucily over the stones, chattering merrily with the reeds, as it washed their feet in its sparkling waves, and laughing at their shrill whistling answers.

‘How pleasant this place is! If I could only get free, what a snug bedroom I could find in that oak-tree, and a delicious supper in the gorse. How provoking it was of Ellise to fasten her sash round me in this way—she might have known.’ But then her conscience pricked her; how could she speak unkindly of her little companion, who had forgotten her own peril, in her unselfish care for her friend, and whose last words, as she was being carried away by the cockchafer, were a sorrowful lament over the dangers to which she had exposed her. For the first time in her

life it dawned upon Amy's mind that misfortunes may happen without any one being to blame.

'What do such troubles come for then? I wish they wouldn't, I was so happy with Ellise.'

'Try, try, try again,' sang the little river as it leapt over a high stone, sending a shower of golden drops all around.

'We did try again,' whistled the reeds, 'for they cut us all down last year, and now we have grown up stronger and taller than ever.'

'Try again,' sighed Amy; 'it's all very well to say so, but how am I to try? I only tear my wing worse and worse when I do. If only there were some one here who would help me.' As she spoke, she saw a bee and a hornet flying towards her, and she recognised in them the same she had seen in the greenhouse that morning. She waited impatiently for their approach, looking up piteously in their faces with her soft brown eyes.

'There's that identical lazy butterfly that we saw this morning,' said the bee; 'a pretty mess she's got into now! That's what fine dressing and idleness brings upon people—just what I said.'

'Oh! please, will you help me?' said Beauty.

'Not I,' said the bee; 'don't you see how I am loaded with wax? I've only just time to take it home and store it before sunset. You have got into trouble by your own fault, and you must get yourself out of it.'

‘Dear Mr. Hornet, you are not loaded,’ said Beauty, ‘will you help me? With your sharp forceps, you could set me free in a moment.’

‘I am very sorry for you,’ said the hornet, ‘and think the bee’s observations are very unkind; but I can’t stay now. The bee has promised me a nice supper of honey to-night, and I shall be too late if I stop to help you. I will come this way in the morning, and assist you then. Good-bye, I am very sorry for you.’

‘Selfish creatures!’ said Amy; ‘however, if no one will help me, I must do what the river advises,—try again. But how? that is the question. It’s of no use struggling—that only pulls the silken knots tighter. I will endeavour to get back upon my leaf; it will be very cold on the river during the night, I am afraid, but I shall be safer there from any enemies, and perhaps, in the morning, the little fishes that were so kind to Ellise will nibble my gossamer bonds, as they did her leaf-stalk, and set me at liberty.’

She turned to make the trial, but found to her dismay that, in her struggles to free herself, she had dragged her tiny raft amongst the sedges, where it was lying submerged, and so entangled in the weeds that it was as fast a prisoner as herself. The tears welled up again in her heart, but she forced them back. ‘No, I won’t cry; there’s no use crying.’

‘Don’t cry,’ said the river.

‘I’m not going to. Don’t be impertinent,’ said Amy

rather crossly. 'If you would help me, instead of hopping and leaping over the rocks in that noisy way, it would be more to the purpose than giving empty advice.'

'Ah! ah!' laughed the river, 'you would not like my help;' and he took so long a leap, that he alighted very close to her, whispering as he ran back quickly over the stones, 'My help would turn you into a water baby; ah! ah! you wouldn't like that.'

'That's very true,' said Amy, 'and, after all, I might be worse off. This place is very dry, and the grass is very soft. If there were only some large leaves within reach, such as gave me so snug a shelter this afternoon, when I escaped from the blackbird.'

She looked round again to scan her position more closely, when she perceived three black ants crawling quickly towards her.

'They are very small' she said to herself, 'but they have sharp teeth and look intelligent. I daresay they will help me if I ask them. I wish I had something to offer them as a reward, for they don't look very good-natured.'

Indeed, as they approached nearer, they looked so very much the reverse, that, small as they were, she felt afraid, and tried to creep under the grass to hide herself.

'There's a prize!' said the foremost. 'It isn't often we get a taste of butterfly.'

‘What a triumph for us to take such a tit-bit home,’ said the youngest.

‘Stop!’ said the third, the eldest of the three, ‘don’t be rash. Look at the chains by which she is fastened. In trying to secure her, we may chance to get our own feet entangled. Go home and call the elders, and let us hold a consultation.’

Off ran with all speed both the young ones, while the eldest walked cautiously round the butterfly to reconnoitre. In an incredibly short time the ground all round the unhappy Beauty seemed alive with a black moving throng, gazing at her with murderous eyes.

For a time it was all confusion, every one running hither and thither, and all talking at once. At last a grey and aged ant mounted a stone in the centre of the throng, and beckoning to some fifty of the oldest and wisest ants to come round him as his council, called for silence.

‘My friends,’ said he, ‘this is a great discovery that our brave young hunters have made, but it is too late this evening to attempt to carry our prize home. There are two dangers in securing it, which will oblige us to use much caution : First, to avoid the gossamer trap ourselves, which we can only do by removing it gently before us with sticks, so as to be able to approach our prey with safety ; and secondly, not to remove too much of it and so allow our enemy to escape. In short, the task before us is no easy one,



we must kill the butterfly in her trap, without getting caught in it ourselves.'

'Our father speaks wisely,' said one of the councilors by his side ; 'it is only an hour to sunset, and this task will take us nearly two hours.'

'Ah, more than two,' said another ; 'for only two, or at least three of our workers, can be employed at a time in clearing a passage.'

'I could do it in half-an-hour, I am sure,' said the shrill voice of a young jet black ant, 'if you would only give me leave. I'll run the risk of getting caught ; I'm not afraid.'

'No, no,' said the grey-headed chief ; 'make no rash attempts ; it is as safe here as in our larder, till the morning ; by the first dawn of day we will return.'

'Cowardice !' cried a young ant. 'The grey heads are old fools !' cried another. 'Let us try and do it in spite of them !' muttered a third. And then arose a wild commotion, the eldest ants calling upon the younger ones to obey them, and return home ; the younger encouraging one another in a scheme of revolt. At last Amy heard a whisper go round the young rebels—'Let us pretend to obey, and when the elders are safely asleep, we can come out again and work by moonlight.'

At this moment a sharp pain ran through every nerve of her body. A young ant had cleverly crept down a blade of grass which was hanging just over

her head, and had dropped down upon her. Quivering with pain, she struggled away from his terrible sting, calling out in her dire distress,—‘ Oh ! Lily Fay, help me ! save me ! ’

Immediately the young rebel and his companions, who had been trying to follow him, found themselves inextricably entangled in the silken web, while many of their elders, who were engaged pulling them back, were themselves pushed forward, by invisible hands, into the same fatal net. To complete their confusion, a foot came down in the very centre of them, and a voice, well known to Amy, called out—‘ Hulloo ! what’s the row here ? Here’s a congregation of blackies.’ Scores of them were crushed, and the remainder scuttled off for their lives, while Hubert (for he it was), laughing at their discomfiture, helped the work of destruction, by switching them right and left, with a bunch of leaves he held in his hand. Meanwhile his sister had approached, and looking down, said,—‘ Why, here is the very same butterfly we saw this morning in our garden. Poor little thing ! it has got entangled in this web, and one of its wings is torn, and it looks so weak and sick.’

‘ I dare say one of those wretched ants has stung it,’ said another little voice, and Amy, faint as she was, looked up in amazement, for it was like herself talking to her.

True enough, there was a little girl just like the

little Amy she had been only that morning,—the same height, the same coloured eyes, the same hair. The little hand was put down to take her up, and lifting her gently from the ground, placed her on a soft bed of fragrant moss and honeysuckle that was in a basket on her arm ; and as she touched her all the pain of the sting left her, and Beauty felt quite revived.

‘Who are you?’ said Beauty. ‘I was Amy this morning, and I am Amy now ; and yet you look like me ! But you can’t be me, for I am myself. I don’t like you to be Amy.’

It did not occur to Amy, till she had finished her speech, that since she had been a butterfly only the insects and animals could understand what she said ; but now she suddenly remembered it, and therefore she was surprised to find that the little girl understood her, and giving a quick intelligent glance said,—‘ Stop a moment, and you shall see.’

Hubert, in his attack upon the ants, had kicked down a small heap of earth that proved to be their nest, and whilst he and his mother and Clara were engaged watching the rushing to and fro of the besieged ants, the apparent little Amy slipped behind a gorse bush, and depositing on the grass the basket in which Beauty was lying, suddenly vanished, and in her place was standing a tiny fairy child. She was as small, and almost as pretty, as Ellise ; but there

was a roguish look in her face, and a shrewd, almost wicked, gleam in her eyes, which Amy did not like.

‘You are not Lily Fay,’ she said.

‘No,’ said the fairy child, ‘I am not Lily Fay ; my name is Sylphina. How surprised you look ! Don’t you know, whenever a little child is taken by the fairies, they send a fairy child to take its place ?’

‘Do they ?’ said Amy. ‘Oh ! I didn’t know that. It is very kind of the fairies to do that, because then mamma is not frightened about me. She thinks she has got her little Amy with her all the time, though she hasn’t. Do you like to be a little child, Sylphina ?’

‘It’s rather fun for a little while,’ answered the fairy, ‘I tease them all so, but I should soon get tired of it.’

‘I hope you are not naughty?’ said Amy. ‘Mamma will think it’s me, and it is not fair to make her think me naughty, when it isn’t me, you know.’

‘Not more naughty than you were to be discontented, and wish to be a butterfly when you were a little girl.’

‘I did not really wish it, and now I’d give anything to be a little girl back again,’ sighed Amy.

‘Lessons and all ?’ said the fairy.

‘Oh yes ; anything to be a child again—it is so miserable never to be kissed. But how are you naughty ? Do tell me, Sylphina.’

'Oh, I only disappear. I lead them such merry games of hide-and-seek

Over hill, over dale,  
Through bush, through brier.  
Up and down, up and down,  
I do lead them up and down.

And when they think I am quite lost, I appear standing quite sedately close by their side. Oh, these human mortals, what fools they be!' And Sylphina laughed a scornful mocking laugh, and clapped her tiny hands, and danced in wicked glee round the butterfly.

'Amy, Amy, where are you? Come, my dear, we must go home, it is getting late.'

'There, they are calling me,' said the fairy; 'now you shall see the fun.'

'Oh, don't, please don't,' said Amy; but the fairy only laughed the more, saying—

'Oh, it's only fun. But I must hide you—you must stop here.' She blew gently on the butterfly, and Amy felt powerless to move; then shaking a pearl from her hair, and placing it on the ground, a woodbine sprung up, and growing rapidly, flung its graceful tendrils and flowers over the basket, so as completely to conceal it. Then off she glided, singing—

'Over hill, over dale,  
Through flood, through fire,  
Over park, over pale,  
I do wander everywhere.'

She danced round the gorse bush, ran up the rough

bark of the oak, and seated herself upon the topmost acorn, then gliding down an overhanging branch, dropped close by Amy's basket, behind which she laid down to rest, panting and laughing.

'Oh, do stop ; do show yourself,' said Amy. 'Listen, mamma is getting quite angry ; don't tease her so.'

'Oh, but isn't it fun?' said the fairy, and up she jumped, calling out in a voice the exact imitation of Amy's, 'Here I am, mother, here I am.' Then skipping off to a distance, cried out in the same tone, in piteous accents,—'Oh ! Hubert, help me ! I am sinking in a bog !' and when Hubert arrived at the spot, he could see no one, but far off, from the river side, came the voice,—'I'm all right now. I've found such a lovely bed of water-lilies in the river, and I am going to get one.' Then came a splash and a scream that made Mrs. Selwyn, Clara, and Hubert all rush in terror to the spot, to see nothing when they got there, and only to hear the same provoking little voice crying out,—'Oh ! there's such a beautiful piece of mistletoe on this grand old oak. I must climb up and pick it. Hubert, come and catch it.'

'Amy,' said Mrs. Selwyn, 'this is more than I can bear. What has come to you, child ? I never knew you so wild and naughty as you have been to-day. You must not attempt to climb the oak, but come immediately, and walk quietly home.'

'Ha ! ha ! ha !' laughed Sylphina, appearing again

by Amy's side, 'there's a frolic! Wouldn't you like to be able to do that now?'

'No,' said Amy indignantly; 'I would not be so naughty if I could. Poor mamma! I don't like you at all; you know you ought not to do it. I'll tell Lily Fay all about you, and then she'll turn you into a caterpillar, or a frog, or something nasty.'

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed the sprite, 'you'll tell Lily Fay, will you? When you see her, I suppose; and when will that be? Take care, if you are rude I'll leave you stuck there, and no one will be able to find you, except your dear friends the ants.'

'I am sorry I spoke so angrily, Sylphina,' said Amy; 'I didn't mean to be rude. But, oh, please don't vex mamma any more. See, she is looking up into the tree, and how anxious she looks! I am not going to tell tales, but I am sure if Lily Fay were here, she would wish you to be good.'

As she spoke, a sudden gust of wind shook the woodbine, and one of its branches struck Sylphina a smart blow on the cheek, while another waving gently over Beauty removed the spell by which she was bound. Sylphina turned pale and trembled. 'Ah, well!' she said, 'I suppose I must leave off now. Heigho! how stupid you are not to like fun.' Again the woodbine struck her, and this time so violently that she was obliged to lay hold of it to prevent herself from falling, when immediately both she and the

woodbine vanished, and the little elf girl appeared again.

‘I don’t see you, Amy,’ said Mrs. Selwyn; ‘come down from the tree you are frightening me sadly.’

‘Here I am, mamma,’ said the elf child quietly, coming from behind the gorse bush. And, basket in hand, she stood before Mrs. Selwyn, looking the picture of meekness.

‘What has come to you, child?’ said Mrs. Selwyn, taking her hand. ‘You are so changed! You are not like my little Amy of former days. What makes you so wild and wilful?’

‘I don’t know; perhaps I am changed,’ said the child, ‘for I don’t like to be good, it’s so dull. I love fun better than goodness. Heigho! it’s a dull world, make the best of it!’ Mrs. Selwyn looked grieved and puzzled, and taking the basket, which the child was swinging from side to side in a careless manner, she gave it to Clara, saying, ‘Well, don’t let your love of fun make you forget obedience; and now, walk quietly by me for the rest of the way home.’ To walk quietly, however, seemed a perfect impossibility to the little sprite. Up and down at every instant, she was now kicking a stone before her, now jumping aside to knock down a mole-hill, and anon dragging at Mrs. Selwyn’s hand as far as she could, to rush after a cockchafer. Mrs. Selwyn looked down at her several times and sighed. Poor Beauty, when she saw her



mother's sad disappointed look, felt very miserable that her mother should think it was she who was so disobedient, so wilful, so mischievous ! And she could do nothing, she could not even fly to her now, with her lame wing, and as to trying to speak, she knew it was of no use, her mother could not understand her if she did.

'Well, as I can't prevent Sylphina being naughty, and can't make mamma understand it isn't me, there's no good my looking,' said Beauty ; 'it only makes me unhappy.'

So she buried her head in the soft bed of moss in her sister's basket, folded her wings, and was soon fast asleep, nor did she wake till the next morning, when the rising sun, shining brilliantly into her sister's bedroom, aroused her.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DROWNING FLY.

**I**T was a hot night, and the door between the bedroom and the schoolroom was open, as was also the schoolroom window, leading to a veranda full of flowers.

Amy found a lace veil had been thrown over the basket to keep her captive, but she easily contrived to creep from under this light covering, and flew to her sister's bed to kiss her. In the corner of the room was her own little bed. Should she go to it? Was Sylphina there? She wished to go, but was rather afraid. Perhaps Sylphina would be awake. Did fairy children ever sleep? Perhaps she would begin her mischievous tricks again. At last her curiosity got the better of her fears, and she flew cautiously upon the curtain, peeping round the edge. She had no need to fear: the bed was empty. What a relief it was to her! there was neither child nor fairy to be

seen, yet as she turned away from the bed she fancied she heard in the distance Sylphina's mocking laugh.

She flew into the schoolroom. How strange it seemed to her. There were her toys, her books, her own peculiar chair. She flew from one to the other, but was terribly vexed to find that she did not care for any of them ; they were so useless to her. There was her doll. What could she ever have found to admire in that huge, cold, immoveable lump of wax ? Then her ball ; why, she had forgotten even how she used to play with it. Her favourite picture-book ; she felt sure she should like that. Alas ! numerous as were her eyes, they were unable to convey any idea of the pictures, nor could she read a single word.

'How stupid I have grown!' she said to herself. 'I wonder, if ever I get back to be a little girl again, whether I shall have forgotten all I knew ? Perhaps I shall have to begin learning my letters all over again ; how tiresome that will be, and people will think me such a dunce ! I think—I am not sure—but I think I would almost rather never be a little girl again than that.'

She spoke cautiously, for she was afraid she might be taken at her word, and she was very far indeed from feeling sure that she should like always to remain a butterfly, whatever troubles might happen to her in becoming once more a little child.

With the sweet morning air came in a delicious scent from the flowers that filled the veranda. At all events, this pleasure was left to her ; she loved flowers as much now as when she was a child. She flew about from one to another for some time, then looked with longing eyes into the garden. Should she fly down to that lovely bed of roses ? She might lose her way again. She might meet some of her old enemies. Yet how pleasant it looked ; and there were some other butterflies abroad. She might have a little chat with them. Perhaps they would be able to tell her where Apollo was. She looked at her torn wing. It was not very perceptible when she was at rest ; it made her halt a little in flying, that was all. Would he care for her still ? Her cogitations were interrupted by a voice close to her ear, and looking round, there stood Sylphina by her side.

‘I know what you are thinking about,’ she said ; ‘you want to see Apollo again. Well, I met him down there with a companion, and they were talking about you. I’ll send him up to you,’ and winking one of her wicked little eyes, she disappeared. A moment afterwards, Beauty saw two butterflies alight on a geranium close by. She recognised them immediately, and hiding behind a leaf, overheard their conversation.

‘Dearest Lady Fritillary,’ said Apollo, ‘do not fly from me ; consent to be my bride ; do not send me

away from your dear presence, to be for ever miserable.'

'To be your bride!' said Lady Fritillary, tossing her head; 'why, that little conceited chit Beauty told me she was to be your bride.'

'Ah, I had not seen your superior charms then!' said Apollo. 'She was, as you say, a little conceited chit. I took compassion on her because of her youth, but I never really cared for her; my heart is yours, wholly yours; your beauty is far superior to any she ever possessed, and I hear now she has grown quite ugly.'

'I never thought her pretty,' said Lady Fritillary, 'and her taste in dress was odious. That heavy purple velvet was more fit for an old maid than for a young bride.'

'Ah, most lovely lady!' said Apollo, 'you must not be hard upon those who have not the same charms nor the same exquisite taste that you have.'

Beauty waited to hear no more; mortified and vexed to the heart, she flew back into the school-room. Her rival caught sight of her as she passed, and in a whisper loud enough for her to hear, said, 'Why, Apollo, there the odd little thing is; she has indeed grown ugly!'

'Sweet one, that you can never be,' was Apollo's answer.'

As Beauty flew hurriedly back into the schoolroom

she was so miserable, so absorbed in her own wretchedness, that she did not notice Sylphina, who was standing on the table holding her sides with laughter. She alighted on the table, and folding her wings over her eyes, so as to shut out, if possible, all sights and sounds, gave herself up to her wounded feelings.

‘Oh! if I could only die!’ she said. ‘Nobody cares for me.’

‘Die! nonsense,’ said Sylphina; ‘what do you want to die for?’

‘Because I have grown ugly; because nobody loves me; because they call me a little ignorant chit,’ said Amy passionately. ‘Oh dear! oh dear! He said he had *never* cared for me.’

‘And if you were not a “little ignorant chit,” you would know why your faithless lover says this,’ said Sylphina. ‘Don’t be a goose, but listen to me. That old maid he pretends to love, for whose aged smiles he has cast off your youthful beauty, is—silver washed! and her dresses are all pearl-bordered Ha! ha! ha! do you understand now? you little innocent.’

‘I don’t see that that’s any comfort to me,’ said Beauty sadly. ‘If it’s because I have got no silver or pearls that nobody loves me, it only makes it worse. It is very hard that Lady Fritillary should have the silver and pearls, and the love too.’

‘And who would care for love that silver and pearls

would buy? I know I would not. Come, cheer up; there's Clara ready enough to love you, though you are nothing but a butterfly, if you will only fly upon her hand, and show no fear of her.'

This thought did cheer Amy, and she flew off to her sister's bed. 'Oh, you darling little thing!' said Clara, starting up in her bed, 'I thought I had lost you; you good little pet not to fly away!—Look, Amy, how tame it is.'

'Oh, I am so sleepy,' said a voice from the little white bed in the corner; and Sylphina, in her child form again, sat up and stretched herself.

'How absurd you are over that butterfly, Clara; you talk to it as if it could understand you. I declare I think you love it better than you love me.'

'Nonsense,' said Clara, jumping out of bed, and throwing her arms round the pretended Amy, a proceeding which was met by Sylphina giving her so sharp a pinch that it brought the tears into Clara's eyes. 'You need not be so rough, Amy,' she said, 'else, though I do love you, I shall not be fond of kissing you. I shall think my poor despised little butterfly more worthy of love, for it does not pinch me to show its affection.'

Beauty might now have led a happy and tranquil life. She was petted by Clara, she was secure from enemies, and had a constant supply of fresh flowers; but, nevertheless, she felt dreary. She wanted her free-

dom, and yet was afraid to seek it in the garden. She wanted a companion to talk to. She could not forget the mortification of being called ugly by Apollo and that hateful Lady Fritillary. Then to think that that spiteful old maid was a bride, and that she, poor Beauty, was left to be an old maid, and called odd and shabby. And what made it worse, she was forced to acknowledge the truth of it. She had grown shabby and dusty, and her torn wing made her fly very clumsily, and all her bright spirits were gone.

To add to her troubles, Sylphina was for ever playing tiresome pranks, worrying all around her. That very morning, when the lesson-bell rang, she was nowhere to be found. High and low did they all hunt for her, and when, after more than half-an-hour's search, Mrs. Selwyn sent the nurse back to the nursery, and seated herself at the piano to give Clara a music lesson, Sylphina, who had been all the time perched on the top of the bookcase, appeared again as Amy, walking quietly in from the veranda, pretending to be perfectly unconscious that she had been missed. Then, ten minutes afterwards, she had taken the pin out of Mrs. Selwyn's knitting, dropped Clara's thimble into the ink-bottle, and added tails to all the o's, and heads to all the i's, in Hubert's copy-book. Poor Beauty saw it all from the top of the book-shelves, but could do nothing to prevent it, and laying her head down sadly, she exclaimed, 'Oh, I am so unhappy !



I am so useless ! I wish I could be something better than a butterfly ! I wish I could be a child again.'

Suddenly a ray of sunshine, glowing with the most brilliant rainbow colours, shone full upon her, and the same lovely voice she had before heard came floating from the distance its delicious music :—

'And wouldst thou wish to be a child  
Again, at mother's knee ?  
Some kindness thou must show to one  
Who 's been unkind to thee.'

'Sylphina is the only one who has been unkind to me, and I can't show her any kindness, I hate her so, because she worries mamma, and makes her think me naughty,' cried Amy passionately.

The brilliant sunshine faded, the wind sighed sadly through the flowers, and the voice sounded more distant as again it sang—

'Then wouldst thou wish to make a change ?  
Some kind act thou must do,  
And brighter, better, thou shalt grow,  
And ever lovelier too.'

'What kind act can a little miserable, weak butterfly do ?' said Amy.

The children had just had their luncheon, and on a side-table was still standing their empty mugs, and a milk-jug half filled with milk, into which a poor fly had fallen, and was struggling for life.

'Perhaps I could save that fly from being drowned,' said Beauty joyfully. She flew down immediately,

and, standing upon the edge of the milk-jug, stretched out a leg to the little drowning creature. The fly seized so eagerly upon the proffered help, that Beauty's hold upon the slippery edge of the jug gave way, and she slid down into the milky lake. The fly crawled upon her back, and from thence was able to reach a place of safety, and as Beauty was drowning she heard its grateful thanks. 'Oh! you do not know, you generous creature, the good that you have done. I have five children at home; if you had not saved me, they would have been orphans, and must have perished.'

'I *have* been able to do a kind act. I am so glad,' faintly whispered Amy, and then a dreamy state stole over her. She felt as if she were being carried away by gentle zephyrs she knew not whither, while softest melodies breathed around her, till she sank into unconsciousness.

Suddenly a burst of brilliant sunshine roused her to new life, and she found herself standing on the window sill, a beautiful bird, pouring out from her little throat the richest harmonies.

'Oh! what a lovely canary!' exclaimed Clara; 'where can it have come from?'

'It is not a canary, my dear,' said her mother; 'it is a golden oriole; it is exactly like one your aunt Elizabeth brought from India.'

'Jug, jug, jug, jug, jug, trill-la,' sang the little bird.

'What a delicious change! I am no longer dumb. I can pour out my feelings of gladness in joyous song. I can express my affections with gentle warblings, or with mournful chirps tell my griefs.'

She flew on her mother's hand with such an exulting song, that her little throat swelled almost to bursting. Then she stopped, looked up at her mother, to see if she understood her, turning her head gently from side to side, to catch her endearing words. Then again burst forth with soft rich trills—

'Jug, jug, jug, jug, jug, trill-la,  
Oh, mother dear, I love you!  
Jug-jug-jug trill, lill, lill, la,  
Your Amy is beside you.'

'How tame it is,' said Clara, 'one would think it was talking to us.'

'I wish we could understand what it says,' said Hubert. 'I dare say it is telling us a long story of where it has come from, and all its adventures.'

'Ah,' said his mother, 'whether it is telling us or not, we must try and find them out, for its tameness shows it must be some one's pet bird.'

Sylphina, who had all this time been singularly silent, hunting all over the room, now joined them, saying, 'Clara, your pet butterfly has disappeared, perhaps the fairies have changed it into a bird.'

'I am very much obliged to them if they have,' said Clara, laughing, 'for I like a bird much the best, but I am afraid the foolish little butterfly must have flown



Amy takes her place as Clara's pet.—*l'age* 82.



away. I am sorry for it, for with his lame wing he will be sure to get into trouble.'

Amy burst forth again into ecstatic song ; if she could only make her sister understand who she was. She flew first upon Clara's hand, then upon her head, and finally upon her shoulder, finishing by putting her beak caressingly between her sister's lips, as she bent over her.

'You sweet little thing,' said Clara, delightedly, gently stroking its head. 'Mother, dear, do let me keep it !'

'Most willingly, dear, if no owner claims it ; but I am afraid there is no chance of that. So tame and so beautiful a bird is certain to be a valued one.'

After a few days no one being found to claim it, Amy took her place as Clara's pet, Sylphina asserting she was sure it had come direct from Fairy-land ; and Hubert declaring that he was certain it was the poor old butterfly turned into a bird, and that it ought to be called Beauty.

'And so it shall,' said Clara. 'It deserves the name for its own sake, as well as being a remembrance of our lost pet.'



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FAIRY SCHOOL.

**F**OR some time Amy was very happy in her new life. Petted and caressed by all, she had liberty to go wherever she liked. She would stand upon the children's heads as they ran up and down stairs, or sat at their lessons ; she was welcomed at all their meals, and allowed to help herself to anything she fancied.

Often in the early morning she would take short flights into the garden, and have a chat with the blackbirds and thrushes, and go with them on hunting excursions for grubs and worms.

Once they wanted her to join a grand butterfly hunt, but this she steadily refused, and she was very glad that she had, when she saw them bring in the dead body of Apollo as one of their victims. It was sadly mangled, but she contrived, when they were dividing the spoil, to secure his head and one of his

wings, which she carried away and buried under a myrtle. She could not forget that he had been kind to her when she was very lonely.

The only drawback to her happiness was Sylphina's still continuing her wild mischievous pranks.

This led to constant quarrels between them, till at last, one day when Sylphina had been more than usually troublesome, Amy got so provoked, that she flew at her, and gave her several hard pecks upon her cheek, screaming at the same time, 'You nasty thing, I hate you! I hate you!' From that day she would never go near her, nor even take a piece of sugar from her hand.

This quarrel with Sylphina made her feel lonely and unhappy. She had no one to talk to who could understand her, and she began to get very tired of having nothing to do but sing all day. She envied the thrushes when she saw them so busy and happy building their nests. She began to build one herself, but, alas! she found it was no pleasure doing it alone.

'I wish I had not quarrelled with Sylphina,' she said to herself one day, as she sat mournfully upon the edge of her unfinished nest. 'I wonder whether she would make it up. Perhaps she would if I begged her pardon, and I ought, for it was wrong in me to peck her. Though she is mischievous and very provoking, she has never been unkind to me, and when I



pecked her, she only laughed, and called me a little fool !'

Full of these thoughts, she kept awake one night, and watched for the time when Sylphina should go out to join her fairy companions.

Just as the clock struck twelve, and when Beauty was so sleepy she could hardly keep herself from putting her head under her wing, she was roused by a gleam of light, and looking towards the window, she saw a small airy figure dressed in a cloak of silvery mist stop for a moment and blow gently into the room. It was Zephyr, who had promised to call Sylphina as he went his midnight round.

The next instant Sylphina appeared. Beauty called softly to her,—

'Stop a moment, Sylphina, I have been keeping awake on purpose to speak to you.'

'Well,' said Sylphina, laughing, 'it's a singular proceeding on your part to speak to me at all. I thought you had determined never to come near me again. I suppose that is why you have chosen such a singular time. But make haste with whatever you've got to say, for I am going to school, and I must not be late.'

'Going to school !' exclaimed Beauty in a tone of astonishment. 'What can you go to school for ? You are so clever.'

'Is that what you stayed awake to ask me ?' said Sylphina dryly.

'No,' answered Beauty ; ' I stayed awake to say how sorry I am I have been rude to you, and to beg your pardon, and to ask you to be friends with me. Will you let me ?'

' I never wished not to be friends,' said Sylphina. ' It has been your fault we are not, you are always quarrelling with me. I am quite ready to be friends again. Lily Fay told me to be your friend.'

' Did she ?' said Beauty, brightening up, ' I am glad of that, it was very kind of her. Then, now we are friends, Sylphina, will you tell me what you mean by saying you are going to school ?'

' Why, of course, fairy children must learn as well as human children. The only difference is, that we are not so stupid as they are, and learn faster.'

' Oh ! I should like so much to see a fairy school,' said Amy ; ' will you take me with you ?'

Sylphina hesitated—' Well, I don't know—perhaps I will—I don't see that it will be any harm if I do—it may be of use to me. But mind, if I take you, you must keep close to me, and do just what I tell you. There, be quick, hop upon my shoulder, or we shall be late.'

Amy flew upon her shoulder, and Sylphina shaking out her golden hair covered her completely.

' There, I don't think even the fairies can see you now, and you can peep through and see everything.'

'They won't punish you, I hope, if they do find me out?'

'Won't they, though?' said Sylphina; 'but I don't care, it's fun.'

Amy felt a little uncomfortable. She knew, if Sylphina did not, that it was not right not to care about punishment, or to be careless about doing wrong, because it was fun. But she was so curious to see what a fairy school was like, that she tried to make herself think it was not wrong.

'There can't be any real harm in going,' she said to herself. 'At all events, if it is wrong in Sylphina to take me, that's her affair—it is not wrong in me to go, because nobody has told me not.' But her conscience was not quite easy, though she tried to think it was, and before she had time to argue it out with herself again they were out in the darkness, gliding along with a swift movement, and she was afraid to turn back; she was certain she could not find her way home in the dark. Suddenly they stopped.

'Now look,' whispered Sylphina; and as she spoke, she passed her hand over Amy's eyes, and Amy saw with astonishment that they were standing at the foot of a mound, and that from every quarter troops of tiny, lovely little fairy children were flocking to the same spot.

As she gazed, the side of the mound opened, disclosing a long passage. The walls were of topaz, the

ceiling of sapphires, while the floor was paved with emeralds and rubies. It was brilliantly illuminated, though from whence the light came Beauty could not discover, everything appeared to give out light from itself. Music as from a thousand Eolian harps floated around, and the air was filled with the most exquisite scents.

In danced, and ran, and skipped the merry little elves, in rather disorderly fashion, playing a thousand pranks upon each other as they frolicked along, until they arrived at a gate formed of two large pearls, through which they entered into a magnificent hall, lined with opal, glittering with every colour of the rainbow, and illuminated with diamonds.

Its brilliancy so dazzled Beauty, that it was some moments before she could look at what was passing around her.

When her eyes got accustomed to the wondrous light, she saw crowds of fairy children more than she could count.

Close beside her was a group of little Zephyrs, dressed in robes of glistening mist with wreaths of dewdrops on their heads. They were learning the way to make flowers grow under their feet. It was pretty to watch them, dancing round in gentle, graceful measure, scattering gold dust before them, and as they danced lovely flowers started up everywhere.

Next to them was a troop of Water-elves in silvery blue mantles, with strings of crystals twined in their long tresses.

They were practising leaping, learning to skip and run, and trying who could throw a drop of water the furthest. They were rougher than the Zephyrs. These never spoke above a whisper, unless they were in a passion, which they were sometimes, as other children are; and then they would roar and scream, and even knock down any one who happened to come near them, but generally their tone was a gentle whisper; while the Water-elves seemed never able to do anything without chattering, and shouting, and laughing, and making a great noise about it. The fairy who was instructing them was sometimes obliged to call out 'Hush-sh-sh-sh-sh-sh-e-e-e' in a tone so loud that it drowned all the noise they made put together, before she could make them listen to her. And even then they often only laughed the louder, and jumped the higher, and shouted out 'There's a storm!'

Beauty thought them a very ill-behaved, saucy set of little fairies, and yet she could not help liking them, they were so merry, and had such bright little faces. Then came a lovely group of Flower-elves. How beautiful they were! The richest, rarest materials, of every shade, of the most exquisite colours, formed their dresses, while round their throats and twined in

their hair were strings of rubies and pearls. Beauty could hardly take her eyes off them.

‘What are they doing?’ whispered she to Sylphina; ‘do stop and look.’

‘They are practising rifle firing,’ answered Sylphina; ‘don’t you see their pistols? Look, there is one hammering down some powder. Now she will fire.’

And Beauty saw that they were firing the golden seeds that the Zephyrs caught and trod into the ground.

‘And look, Sylphina, what can those younger ones be doing? they are all looking downwards.’

‘They are learning to fold up their clothes; you see they are more elegantly dressed than any of the other fairies, and so they are obliged to fold up their dresses every evening at sunset. I should not like to be a Flower-elf,’ added Sylphina, laughing; ‘it is so much trouble. Indeed, as I go home in the morning, I often see tears in their eyes, and sometimes they hang their heads, and look quite faint and wearied. But come, I cannot stop, I must go to my own class, or I shall get into a scrape.’

She glided on past the Rainbow-elves. They were learning to separate colours into the most delicate shades, and then inlaying them with the most exquisite tints.

Beauty would gladly have stopped to watch them, but Sylphina glided on.

Past the Twilight elves ; gentle, sad-looking little creatures, dressed in grey gossamer, with girdles and necklaces of moonshine.

Amy could not make out what they were doing. They appeared to be only walking round and round in slow measured steps, with folded hands.

‘What are they learning, Sylphina?’ she asked. ‘What is the matter with them? They look so sad.’

‘They are learning to put the babies to sleep,’ answered Sylphina. ‘They are not sad, though they look so quiet. By and bye, when the moon rises, they will join hands and dance in rings. It is they who make the fairy rings on the grass ; they are merry enough then, and often make the babies laugh in their sleep.’

As they again glided on, Amy was startled by a sound of screams and wailing, and looking round, she saw on her left hand a dreary opening, like a cavern. At first it appeared quite dark, but when she had gazed at it steadily for a moment or two, she saw that it was lighted with a sombre red light, and she distinguished a number of elfish figures clothed in dark purple. They were moving restlessly about, and did not seem to be learning anything, except a very few who were gathered round a stern-looking fairy near the entrance. She had a rod in her hand, which she held up, while she directed them to move certain

weights backwards and forwards. Quite close to the entrance stood a still sterner looking fairy, whose business seemed to be to drive back with his whip any one who tried to escape from the darksome cavern to the bright Hall of Light.

Beauty felt Sylphina shudder as she hurried past.

‘Who are they? What are they doing? Why does that cruel fairy hold her rod over them? Why are they kept shut up there?’ cried Amy in a terrified whisper.

‘Hush!’ said Sylphina, ‘she is not cruel. Those are the Wicked elves; the elves who will not try to be good; who will not be obedient; who are malicious and spiteful. They are sent there and turned into Trolls. It is they who make the black clouds that hide the sun, but never come down in rain. They make the blights, and scatter mildew in the fields. They whisper bad dreams to children, and make them afraid in the dark.’

‘And why does that fairy with the rod make some of them move weights backwards and forwards?’

‘She is the Fairy of the Birch tree, and though she looks stern, she has a loving heart. She might be in the Hall of Light, but she wished to give one more chance of amendment to the unhappy Trolls, and after much entreaty, she obtained leave from the Queen of the Fairies to shut herself up with them, and try what she could do. Any one who goes into her class, and



does whatever she bids them for a year and a day, is allowed to come back into the Hall of Light.'

'And do any get good and come back?' asked Amy.

'Very few,' said Sylphina; 'I only know of one,' she added, in a hoarse whisper; and again she shuddered.

A thought darted through Amy's head. 'Were you ever—' then she stopped, for Sylphina turned very pale, and trembled so violently, that Amy was obliged to cling to her hair, or she would have been shaken off her shoulder.

'Don't ask so many questions,' said Sylphina, recovering herself.

'Oh, I am very sorry,' said Amy, 'I did not mean to vex you, but—' she hesitated, and then said hurriedly, 'I am sure I should love a poor little troll who became good again, better than the best of the other fairies. It would be so beautiful to think she had conquered, and escaped out of that dreadful place,' and she leaned her bill caressingly against Sylphina's cheek.

'You are a dear little thing,' said Sylphina, kissing her.

There was a long silence, then Beauty said timidly, 'Don't answer me if you don't like, Sylphina, but, if a troll escapes, is she obliged to go back to the lowest place in the Hall of Light?'

‘Oh no!’ replied Sylphina, ‘she goes back to exactly the same place she had before, and every one forgets she ever fell from it; but,’ she added in a lower tone, ‘she can never forget it herself.’

‘Dear Sylphina, I do love you so much!’ said Amy gently.

They had now arrived at some steps, and ascending them, found themselves in a second hall, smaller, but far more brilliant than that which they had left. Floor and ceiling and walls were entirely composed of diamonds.

‘You must keep close now, Beauty, and don’t speak even in a whisper; this is my class. This is the school for the Clever elves; here they are taught to speak all the languages in the world; here we learn to throw spells and weave charms. This is the highest class, for all are to be employed in human affairs.’

Beauty gazed around her, absorbed in delight, so lovely were the little creatures by whom she was surrounded. Some of them were employed in weaving pretty thoughts, and painting them with the loveliest tints of rose colour. While others with fairy prisms were engaged in collecting gold and silver rays from the sun and moon, to make a pathway down which these beautiful thoughts slid gently through palace windows and cottage doors, making the children laugh, and the youths dance, and the babies jump and crow in their nurses’ arms.

But the class that most engrossed Amy's attention was the transformation class. It was the funniest sight in the world to watch one little fairy who was trying to change herself into a little girl. She succeeded so far as her body was concerned, and became so tall that her head nearly touched the ceiling, but she could not manage to change her head, and there it remained a tiny, lovely little face, no bigger than a pea, upon a child's body. And it was droller still, when, having been assisted by one of the elder elves to complete the change, she tried to turn herself back again into a fairy. There were the delicate little limbs and body, about two inches high, and a large ungainly head, so top-heavy that, poor little thing, she was obliged to lie down on the floor till one of the other fairies came to her aid.

Amy was so interested in watching her that she did not perceive how the time was flying, till she suddenly heard (just over her head as it seemed to her) a cock crow.

Immediately the fairy lessons were suspended, and, ranging themselves in order, all the little fairies walked slowly before the Fairy Queen's deputy, who was seated on a crystal throne, and as they passed, some were reproved, while others were rewarded with pearls.

As Sylphina approached, Beauty saw the fairy look at her rather severely.

‘And you, Sylphina,’ she said, ‘you have been at your wild pranks again?’

Sylphina hung her head, then lifting it up with a bright look, she said, ‘I have done a kind act to a little bird that pecked me on the cheek and made me angry.’

‘It is well,’ answered the fairy, ‘for indeed your love of mischief made me fear I should have to punish you.’ Then she smiled graciously, and taking a small string of pearls, she wound them round Sylphina’s head.

‘Now go,’ she said, ‘the Queen has sent permission to all the good little fairies to have a moonlight pic-nic, and her messengers attend you in the hall.’





## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FAIRY PIC-NIC.

**W**HEN they returned to the lower hall, they found all the small people in ecstasies of delight ; some arranging their hair, some bedecking themselves with flowers, and all following the Queen's messengers, who, dressed in silver and grey, shouldered their musquets, and blew their tiny horns, as they flew quickly down the hall.

On emerging from the hill, everything seemed a blaze of light. Every blade of grass, every furze bush was illuminated with myriads of fire-flies ; the most ravishing music floated around them, while troops of fairy servants, richly apparelled, were arranging upon tables of mother-of-pearl a vast number of golden dishes, containing all kinds of the richest viands ; every sort of meat, fruit, and preserves. Amy had

no idea fairies regaled themselves so royally. There were dishes, not only of fruits and sweets, but a variety of solid viands, such as Hares' ears, Hounds' tongues, Pheasants' eyes, Larks' spurs, Cranes' bills, Crows' feet, and Robins boiled to rags. But what attracted her attention the most were the preserves. These were truly fairy dishes ; and she observed that they were brought in with more pomp than the other dishes, and were placed only on the higher tables. There were preserved Cloud-berries, and Dew-berries ; and prettiest, most delicate dish of all, preserved Sun-dew.

The small people crowded round the tables, and supped right merrily on the good things set before them, pledging one another in sparkling Dew-drops imported from India, and Starwort which was brought to them in ruby goblets.

Nor did Beauty go without her share. Sylphina contrived to conceal a plate amongst her tresses, which she loaded with the viands she thought most likely to please her. Lark-spurs and Eye-bright, Cloud-berries and Sun-dew, which she said would enable her to take higher flights, and see further and more clearly.

At last the supper came to an end, and the fairy servants cleared and removed the tables as quickly as they had first arranged them.

Then ensued frolics of all kinds amongst the little elves. They danced in circles, they swung by the cobwebs like rope dancers, they ran and leaped over

and under the blades of grass, and hid themselves in the flowers.

For some time Sylphina contented herself with watching her companions, and laughing at their gambols, but at last the spirit of fun overcame her, and when a merry little fairy, who was standing at the top of a foxglove, called out to her, 'Come Sylphina, catch me if you can,' she quite forgot Beauty, and seizing hold of a tall blade of grass that hung over her head, she swung herself up by it so suddenly and so violently that poor Amy was shaken off her shoulder and flung to the ground.

The moment she was thus exposed to view, a dismal shriek arose from all the little fairies, and a sudden darkness enveloped everything. Amy felt herself buffeted and almost stunned as she lay on the ground by a hundred little feet passing over her. When she came to herself she was alone in complete darkness and silence. 'Sylphina,' she called ; but there was no answer, only a rustling in the leaves at some distance off, which might be, for aught she knew, the approach of some dreadful beast of prey.

To add to her misery, rain began to fall heavily. The effect of this was however beneficial, as it forced her to rouse herself, and looking up she was astonished to find that, though it was pitch dark, the fairy food she had eaten enabled her to see distinctly every object that surrounded her. In front, and very near to

her, was a thorn bush, and in the centre of it (for she could see through the leaves) there was the loveliest little nest all lined with moss and wool. For a minute or two she stood looking at it. 'I wonder who it belongs to,' thought Amy, 'and whether, whoever it is, is likely to come back to it to-night. It is so late I shouldn't think they would.' At that moment she heard the curious rustling noise in the distance again which had frightened her before, and thinking to herself that she would be safer up there than on the ground from any great prowling animal, she hopped up into the tree. 'Whoever it belongs to,' she thought, as she hopped into the snug little retreat, 'it is such a small nest he cannot be a larger bird than myself, and I can easily jump out again and beg his pardon if he should come back. I shouldn't mind if he did, it would be pleasanter than being alone.'

Amy said the last words very drowsily, and thoroughly tired out with her night's adventures, her head dropped under her wing, and she was asleep in a moment. When she waked again the sun had been up some hours, and she felt very hungry. 'I wonder,' she said to herself, 'whether Sylphina will come back for me, or how I shall ever find my way home.' Stepping out of the nest, she hopped up from branch to branch till she came to the top of the bush, when, to her joy and no little astonishment, she found herself close to the veranda, and flying up to it, there was her break-



fast prepared for her as usual, and Sylphina waiting for her.

'Well, you have got back safe,' she said; 'I was beginning to be anxious about you. I am sorry I let you fall, I didn't meant to—though to see those little elves scamper, ha! ha! ha! it was worth anything.'

'I was not in the least hurt,' answered Amy; 'and I am much obliged to you, Sylphina, for taking me with you, I never was so much amused in my life.'

'Well, if you are contented, so am I,' replied Sylphina, 'for my having been kind to you gained me these pearls.'

For some time Sylphina seemed a changed being. She had been touched by Beauty's gentle affection; she very seldom now played any mischievous pranks, and she often brought home a pearl, which she exhibited to her triumphantly. Several times she took her with her into the garden, and introduced her to some of her fairy companions, one of whom, a water-elf, taught her a new song, so liquid in its notes that it threw a spell over all who heard it, and riveted them to the ground; whilst another, a flower-elf, taught her how to weave, and showed her how to make beautiful white eggs, and how to paint them prettily with zig-zag lines, so that she might know her own.

But matters were not to go on in this pleasant way for ever.

One day just as Beauty had taken her head from

under her wing, and was beginning to think it was time to plume her feathers, and tune her bill for her morning song, Sylphina came skipping to her side, with a string of diamonds in her hand.

‘Wake up, Beauty, wake up, and see what I have won! Now I shall be allowed to learn the last and highest mystery of fairy lore, and then—and then—I shall have no more school. I shall go to Fairyland to be maid of honour to the Queen.’

She danced round Amy, and threw the diamonds into the air and caught them again, and clapped her hands triumphantly.

‘Beauty,’ she said, stopping suddenly, ‘would not you like to go with me? The day of my admission I may ask anything I like of the Queen, and she will grant it. Shall I ask her to make you a fairy?’

‘Oh no! dearest Sylphina, ask that I may be a child again,’ replied Beauty.

‘A child again!’ said Sylphina contemptuously. ‘Is that your highest wish? To grovel upon this dull earth when you might be a fairy, and fly away amongst the stars! To be only a poor weak mortal, when you might be a powerful fairy, able to turn stones into diamonds! Well, I should have thought you would have had more ambition, Beauty!’

Beauty hesitated. She would like to have power, she would like to see Fairyland, she was sorry to disappoint Sylphina; but yet she could not help it, she

did wish to be a child again. Children were weak and useless certainly, yet she had a sort of consciousness that a child was worth more than a fairy ; she could not remember why at that moment, but she felt sure they were.

‘Well?’ said Sylphina impatiently.

‘Don’t be vexed with me, dear Sylphina ; it is very kind of you to think of me in the midst of your own joy. I should like to be a fairy if I could be a fairy and a child too, or if mamma could be a fairy as well as me. I don’t know what you mean by being ambitious, but I should like to be able to fly about amongst the stars, and to slide up and down the rainbows—that must be great fun. Do you think the Fairy Queen would let me be a child, and yet be able to slide up and down the rainbows too?’

‘Oh no!’ replied Sylphina ; ‘you can have no fairy powers if you are only a child. I will ask for you to be a child again if you wish it, but you will never be able to see or speak to me or Lily Fay any more. Do you love us so little, Beauty, that you care nothing for that?’

‘Never speak to you again! Oh! Sylphina, I shall be so sorry, so very sorry for that.’

‘Ah, well,’ replied Sylphina, ‘you need not decide at once ; you will have time to think more about it, for I have one thing more to learn before I can go to Fairyland. I can turn myself into a child or whatever

I wish, but I have got to learn how to turn others into something else. This is the highest fairy power, and it is terribly difficult to acquire.'

'How long will it take you to learn it?' asked Amy.

'I don't know,' replied Sylphina, with a weary sigh. 'Some fairies have been a hundred years learning it. Do you know, Beauty, I must be good all the time. Seven times seven days would be time enough, but then if I only do one naughty act, I shall forget all I have previously learned. Each time I commit only the least little fault, I shall have to begin all over again. Oh! I know I shall never be able to do it.'

She crouched down on the ground, and laid her head on her knees with a sad gloomy sigh.

'Indeed that is very difficult,' said Amy, 'but don't look so miserable, Sylphina; try hard, try the best you can; perhaps Lily Fay will help you if you ask her.'

Sylphina looked up almost fiercely; 'I can't bear it—I can't be always trying—it's of no use asking me—I never did like to be good, and I never shall.'

'You don't like to be good! Oh! it is wrong to say that,' said Amy, feeling quite shocked.

'Do you know,' replied Sylphina, 'I feel such a temptation to be naughty at this moment? I would give the whole world to be able to do a piece of mischief; and to think of having to be good always!—

always!—I can't do it, and I won't,' and she flung her diamonds on the ground.

'Oh Sylphina! don't talk in that way. Here, take your diamonds again,' and Amy picked them up and held them out to her. 'Kiss them, and tie them round your wrist, and when you feel tempted to be naughty, they will remind you of the reward.'

Sylphina looked at them and shuddered.

'Beauty,' she said, 'it looks to me as if every face of the diamonds was the face of a Troll, and they are all beckoning to me. Oh dear! I shall never be able to be good. I shall never win my way to Fairyland.'

'Yes you will,' said Amy in an encouraging tone, 'if you will only be brave and determined to conquer.'

'I don't know what has come over me,' said Sylphina sadly. 'A little while ago I was so happy, and now—Oh! I can't be good—I can't be good'—and she wrung her hands piteously.

'Perhaps,' said Amy very gravely, 'it is because you spoke so contemptuously of children, and put the fairies above them. It was not right of you to say that, for it is not true. Children, I have heard it said, are angels without wings, and some day they will have wings and fly much higher than the stars, while the fairies are only sprites, and can never even get up to the sun. You were trying to deceive me, and you did for a little while, for I had forgotten all about it, but I remember it now. Say you are sorry for having said

what was not true, and then you will feel good again.'

'But I am not sorry,' replied Sylphina passionately ; 'and what I said is true, for even a Troll is cleverer than a stupid child, and I had rather be a Troll than a child any day.'

As she spoke the diamonds slipped off her wrist and fell to the ground without her perceiving it. Starting up she exclaimed, 'I won't try to be good—it's too hard'—and she walked hurriedly up and down, unconsciously setting her foot upon the precious gift, which crumbled to dust beneath her tread.

'Stop, Sylphina, stop!' cried Beauty. 'Let me sing my fairy song to you, and these bad thoughts will leave you.'

She hopped close to her to caress her hand ; but Sylphina pushed her away angrily with her foot, and in doing so, the thread upon which the diamonds had been strung became entangled round Beauty's leg.

'Well, you need not kick me away,' said Beauty in an indignant tone, for she was very much offended. And she flew off to the tree, where she sat with ruffled feathers, too angry to sing. As she flew, Sylphina caught sight of the thread hanging from her leg, and following her quickly, she sat down by her side, slyly giving the thread two or three twists round the branch. Then jumping up and running to the end, she called out,—

'Come now, where's your song?'

'I intended to sing to you,' said Beauty, 'but I don't like to be pushed away so unkindly; I shall not sing at all now.'

'Very well,' said Sylphina, 'if you won't sing we'll have a dance together.'

She began dancing on the end of the branch, swaying it violently up and down.

Beauty, who was not aware her leg was tied, attempted to fly away, the thread checked her suddenly, and she fell head downwards, suspended in the air.

'Oh Sylphina! please let me go—you will kill me, indeed you will. It makes me so giddy. Do let me go,' cried Amy in an agony of fear.

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed Sylphina, 'sing me a song, if you want to be let go. Ha! ha! ha! you look so funny hanging there.'

'I cannot sing hanging in this way,' said Amy in a humble tone. 'I will sing to you if you will only untie the string.'

Sylphina only answered with renewed laughter, and danced and shook the branch more and more violently.

'I don't want to be unkind, Sylphina, or tell tales, but I must call Lily Fay to help me if you do not stop. You will break my leg, indeed you will.'

Suddenly a violent wind swept through the garden. The trees bent before its fury, and their branches

crashed against each other. The tree on which Beauty was suspended, though a large lime-tree, bent before the tornado, and the clashing of the branches broke the thread by which she was fastened, at the same time flinging Sylphina to the ground.







## CHAPTER IX.

### A DANGEROUS JOURNEY.

**B**EAUTY was not hurt by the fall, but it was some minutes before she recovered from the giddiness that Sylphina's rough shaking had produced. By the time she was herself again the hurricane had ceased. It passed off as suddenly as it had arisen, and the last dark clouds were just scudding away before the sun when Beauty looked round to see what had become of her companion.

'Where are you, Sylphina? Are you much hurt?'

'Croak! och! och! och!' cried a dismal voice from the foot of the tree. 'Och! och! I am a hideous toad for seven years. What shall I do? What shall I do? Och! och!'

'Is that you, Sylphina?' cried Beauty, as she looked down shudderingly at the slimy thing. 'Who turned you into that dreadful toad? Can't you turn yourself back again?'

‘Croak! och! och! My fairy powers are all gone for seven years—seven long miserable years!’

‘Can nothing be done?’ said Beauty, hopping close to her. ‘I would do anything to help you, if I knew what to do. Do you think Lily Fay would help you if I asked her?’

‘Och, och! it was the Fairy Queen herself that struck me down. Lily Fay could not help me.’

Beauty was sadly distressed; her conscience reproached her. If she had not been cross; if she had sung her fairy song to Sylphina, perhaps this would never have happened. Sylphina would have overcome her bad temptations and kept her diamonds, and all would have been happy. Again that horrible croak, ‘och! och!’ broke upon her ear.

‘Beauty,’ said the toad, ‘there is a way in which you could help me, but it is full of danger, and I have been so unkind to you that I cannot expect you to do it for me; you must hate me.’

‘I don’t hate you,’ replied Beauty very earnestly. ‘I am sorry for you, and would do anything I could to help you, anything in the world. I don’t mind the danger; only tell me what I can do.’

‘If,’ replied the toad, ‘you would go to Fairyland and carry one of my tears yourself to the Fairy Queen, she would pardon me.’

‘But I don’t know the way to Fairyland, and I should be afraid to go by myself, it is so far, and I

should not dare to speak to the Fairy Queen if I got there. Oh! I cannot go to Fairyland,' said Beauty sorrowfully.

'Nothing else will save me,' said Sylphina; 'you could do it, Beauty, if you had only the courage to try.'

'How far is it?' asked Beauty.

'You could fly to it in twelve hours,' replied the toad.

'Twelve hours! how could I fly all that time? It is impossible, Sylphina! I would do it if I could, but it is impossible, quite impossible!' and poor Beauty flew up again into the tree.

'Och! och! och!' moaned the toad; and the slimy tears ran down her green flabby cheeks.

'It's no use,' said Amy to herself, 'I cannot do it.'

She turned her back upon Sylphina and tried to sing, and not to think about her; but she found this more impossible than even the trip to Fairyland. Again the dismal cry broke upon her ear, forcing her to look round. There lay Sylphina weeping till the ground around her was quite wet with her tears.

'Oh dear! if I could only do it!' sighed poor Beauty. 'But to fly for twelve hours! It is not possible! Oh, Lily Fay! if I could only do it! Poor Sylphina!'

She looked upwards as she spoke. The sun was shining brightly, while in the distance a shower was

falling, and Beauty saw the same sight she had once before witnessed. A rainbow was spanning the sky, up and down which lovely fairies were disporting. Suddenly they all stopped in the midst of their gambols and looked towards her, and she saw, or fancied she saw, that the one who was standing on the highest point of the bow beckoned to her.

‘Lily Fay is beckoning me,’ she said to herself. ‘I must go—I will go—whatever the dangers may be. She will help me if I get into any great trouble.’

Beauty flew quickly down to Sylphina. She was afraid of giving herself time to think, time to conjure up again her nervous fears.

‘Och! och! och!’ wept the unhappy toad. ‘Seven years! Seven long miserable years!’

‘Sylphina, I will go for you. Give me a tear, and tell me the way.’

‘You will go for me, Beauty? For me who have been so unkind to you? Oh, this is good of you.’

‘Tell me the way, and when I ought to set off, and what I ought to do. Tell me quickly, and I will go at once.’

‘Look, Beauty,’ said the toad, squatting up on her hind legs. ‘Do you see there to the left the moon faintly shining? You will see it better when it is dark.’

‘When it is dark!’ exclaimed Beauty in a frightened

tone. 'Cannot I go by daylight? I shall be sure to lose my way in the dark.'

'There is no fear of your losing your way,' replied the toad. 'The moon will shine very brightly. You could not fly by day, the sun would dazzle you. Besides, you must arrive at Fairyland just at sunrise; it is then that the Queen keeps her Court. Now observe, midway between the moon and the point where the sun sets, you will see a star; the planet Venus it is called. It is more brilliant than any other star in the heavens, because you always see it through the crystal gates of Fairyland. So long as you see Venus, you will be sure that you are flying straight to the crystal gates.'

'But if a cloud should come,' objected Beauty.

'Keep straight on, swerve neither to the right hand nor to the left; the cloud will disperse, and you will see your way again.'

'And how am I to carry your tear?'

'You must carry it in your bill.'

'But then I shall not be able to ask my way, if I should meet any one.'

'No,' replied the toad, 'you must speak to no one, heed no one; you must rest nowhere; let nothing turn you aside, but fly straight on without stopping, until you get to the Fairy Queen herself.'

'Oh! it is a hard task; much harder than I expected!' exclaimed Beauty, her feathers standing on end with fear.

‘And you shrink from the task,’ said the toad. ‘I do not wonder at it, for I have been so unkind to you that I do not deserve that you should encounter risk for my sake.’

‘Oh! it is not that indeed—’ began Beauty, but she was interrupted by the sound of distant music, and the old words came floating softly to her ear—

‘And if you wish to be a child,  
Again by mother’s knee,  
Some kindness thou must show to one  
Who’s been unkind to thee.’

Amy started; she had quite forgotten this verse, but now it inspirited her for the difficult task pure kindness had made her resolve to undertake.

‘Give me your tear, Sylphina; I am impatient to set off,’ she exclaimed.

The tear which Sylphina dropped into Beauty’s beak, instead of feeling soft as she expected, was hard like a bead, which so astonished her, that she laid it on the ground to see what it was.

‘This is not a tear, Sylphina, it is an opal,’ she said.

‘It is all right,’ replied Sylphina; ‘opals are fairy’s tears; did you not know that? Take it up, it is all right; but first sing me one song, dear Beauty, before you go. So Beauty sang her the song the water-elf had taught her, which soothed the poor toad so that she sank into a profound sleep; while Beauty, taking up the tear again, set off straight towards the rising

moon. As the sun went down Venus rose, and changing her course a little, she directed her path straight for that brilliant star.

When she had proceeded on in this way for about two hours a great weariness stole over her, and she perceived approaching her from each side two immense dark clouds crowded with Trolls. They were approaching silently, but as soon as they saw they were perceived they began to grin at her, and roar, and make hideous noises. Poor Beauty's heart sank within her. What should she do? They would overwhelm her and crush her. She dared not open her mouth to call to Lily Fay for help for fear of letting fall the tear. She would not go back or stop flying, though the sky beneath her looked temptingly calm and blue. If she did, they would close over her head and form a complete barrier, and she should never be able to break through them, nor see the star again. She was determined to keep on. Perhaps Lily Fay would help her, though she could not call to her for aid.

The terrible Trolls were now within two feet of her. She saw some of them rise and stretch out their hands to clutch her. She felt so faint with fear that she could hardly move her wings, when just as they were within a few inches of her, a flash of the most brilliant light struck them, scattering them to the right and left, and pursued them as they fled howling and roar-



*Beauty pursued by the Trolls.—Page 126.*





ing before it. Such a storm of hail fell upon the earth that day as was never known before, for the Trolls always weep icy tears, because of their cold bad hearts. Meantime the light left a shining pathway for Beauty, and recovering all her strength, she pursued her way with redoubled energy.

Onwards and upwards she flew for two hours longer, keeping her eyes fixed on the one brilliant spot which she knew to be the gates of Fairyland. The moon and stars shed a soft light around her, and she was just delighting herself with the thought that she had got safely through one-third of her journey, when a sort of mist gathered around her. One by one the stars became indistinct, till at last she could not even distinguish Venus. A cold shivering seized her, and her wings moved feebly. Was she losing her strength? Or were the Trolls gathering around her again? Or what was it?

Thicker and thicker, darker and darker, grew the mist.

Must she give up at last? Must she fold her wings and lose all her labour of love, and be dashed back again all the immense way she had come? Was she going upwards or downwards now? She could not tell. She began to get giddy with fear and doubt. Then she roused herself; 'If I do fall back again,' she thought to herself, 'at least it shall not be willingly; I will not give up.' She made a desperate effort to

go forward, when suddenly she emerged from the mist, so suddenly that she almost recoiled, for the contrast of the darkness from which she had escaped to the bright light in which she now found herself made her fancy for the moment that she had flown up against the moon. To her joy there was Venus again shining out more brilliantly than ever, and re-directing her course, from which, in the darkness, she had slightly deviated, she continued her adventurous flight towards the crystal gates. She fancied she could see them now. She was sure she heard the fairies singing.

There certainly was a white and dazzling light, which looked like crystal, but it puzzled her, because it was a little to the right of Venus, and appeared to lead away rather than towards the planet. Yet surely there were fairy voices, for now she could distinguish the words.

'Perhaps it may be the wall of Fairyland, and these are some of the fairies come out to meet me, and lead me to the fairy gates,' thought Beauty.

She slackened her speed slightly to listen to their song, and plainly heard these words sung in tones so softly melodious, so silvery sweet, that it required all her resolution not at once to fly towards them—

'Stay, pretty Birdie, rest awhile,  
Full weary must thou be,  
This is the gate of Fairyland,  
We've come to welcome thee.'

The gate of Fairyland ! Could it be so ? She hesitated and turned her eyes away from Venus to look more closely at the bright light from which the voices proceeded. She was very tired, and the prospect of a little rest was very pleasant. Yet it could not be the crystal gates, for the toad had told her it would take twelve hours to reach them, and she had not been flying much more than half that time. Still if she could only rest a little while, and she inclined her flight slightly towards the tempting sounds.

‘They are no doubt, I think, friendly fairies,’ she said to herself, ‘who will help me on my way, and they are so near the direct road, it is such a mere trifle out of my path,’ and she turned a little more towards them.

Then the toad’s words came vividly to her mind, ‘You must rest nowhere ; let nothing turn you aside.’

She raised her eyes again towards Venus, and was frightened to see how far it was from her, and how much its brilliancy was diminished. Terrified beyond description, she turned hastily to retrace her steps, and as she did so, the voices of the Syrens, which had before appeared so soft and sweet, sounded harsh and threatening as they sang—

‘Proud bird, we have gained thee,  
You’ve wandered aside,  
Now we will chain thee,  
Evermore to our side.

'For each of the stars,  
In this grand milky way,  
We are bound to provide  
A fairy some day.

'We will give you a star,  
Over which you may reign,  
But Fairyland now  
You can never attain.'

As they finished their song, Beauty felt something pull her foot, and looking down, saw to her horror a number of crystal threads floating towards her, one of which had wound itself round her leg. And the fairies laughed as they sang—

'Ha! ha! ha! See now you are caught;  
Ha! ha! ha! Your beauty is naught;  
Ha! ha! ha! You may let the tear drop;  
Too late for repentance,  
With us you must stop.'

'I have done wrong,' said Beauty to herself; 'I have done very wrong, but it is never too late to repent. I am sure Lily Fay will help me, for I am very sorry. I did not mean to wander.'

With these thoughts filling her heart, she gazed intently at the now dim star, straining every nerve to go back towards it. Her imprisoned foot drew her down, but determining not to heed the pain, she gave it a violent pull, the crystal thread broke, and she was again free.

Poor Beauty, she found it a long and a hard task to regain the right path, for the wrench had so sprained

her leg that it hung useless by her side, and the thread had cut a deep gash in her foot. It was with the greatest difficulty she could fly in a straight line, and her heart was full of shame and sorrow that she had so readily given way to temptation.

‘How could I be so foolish,’ she said to herself, ‘when the toad told me so plainly that I was not to stop or rest anywhere. Now I am so lame I can only fly very slowly ; I have lost a great deal of time too, and perhaps I shall not have strength to reach Fairy-land, or I may get there too late, and the gates may be shut. And even if I do arrive in time, perhaps the Queen will be so angry with me when she sees my lame foot, that she will not listen to me, for she will know I have done wrong, and left the straight path. Oh dear ! I wish I had not listened to those wicked fairies.’

Her heart grew so heavy with these self-reproachful thoughts, that it made her fly more slowly than even her lame foot, and her head sank down till it was quite hidden in her feathers. But after a while more hopeful feelings came into her mind.

‘There is no use despairing,’ she thought, ‘and there is no use in wishing I had not done what I have. At all events, if I did give way to temptation, I have conquered. I am on the right road again, and now I have gained experience—I shall be wiser for the future—I shall never give way to temptation again, and what-

ever happens, I am determined I will never take my eyes off Venus again till I am safe in Fairyland. Oh dear ! how painful my leg is, and I must not stop even to smooth down the feathers.'

Slowly and painfully she flew along for at least half an hour before she regained the point where she had turned aside, then Venus shone before her again in its full brightness, and her heart swelled with joy and hope as she felt she was once more in the right path.

By degrees a little feeling of pride mingled with her joy, and she began to fancy herself quite a heroine.

'No wonder I was led astray,' she said to herself ; 'it looked so like the crystal gates, any one would have been misled, and it is not every one who would have been so clever and so brave as to get away from those horrid fairies. And though I have lost a little time, I can easily make up for it. My leg is so much better that I shall soon be able to fly quickly ; then I am sure I must be getting near Fairyland, for it is quite eight hours since I left Sylphina, so I don't suppose I shall have any more dangers to run, and if I have I am not afraid of them now.'

The moon had set, so that it was quite dark, and in the darkness Venus shone out with redoubled brilliancy, throwing a bright ray of light all along her path, while the air had become so buoyant that she skimmed through it with scarcely an effort.

'How delicious this is,' she thought ; ' I am so glad I was brave enough to come. I am quite curious to see Fairyland ; how lovely it must be, when even the gates are so bright and beautiful. I really hope Venus will not grow any brighter ; if it does I shall get quite dazzled ; it will be like looking at the sun. Well, at all events, there is no fear of my losing my way, and instead of feeling tired, I feel stronger than when I first set off. This lovely air seems to carry me forward without any effort of my own.'

At this moment a bright spot of light passed rapidly before her, rushed onwards to some distance, and then suddenly disappeared. It was followed immediately by another equally brilliant, which came rather closer to her, making a slight hissing noise as it passed. Another and another followed.







## CHAPTER X.

### FAIRYLAND.

**H**OW curious,' said Beauty to herself, 'what can they be? They look like stars, only the stars don't change places. They are very pretty, and it is very amusing to watch them. They are very like the fireworks I used to see when I was a little girl—Dear me! how long ago that seems! They come rather close though; I hope they will not run against me.'

Beauty's fear was not without foundation, for now numbers came rushing madly along in quick succession, so many that she could not count them; sometimes running after one another—sometimes five or six in a cluster—sometimes quite close to her; before, behind, all around her; and the noise, that in the distance sounded only like a faint hissing, now resolved itself into words—cries of distress.

'S-s-s-save us, sweet sister, s-save us,'—or single words of direful import, shrieked out in tones of terror. 'S-savage beast!'—'Chased! chased!'

At last one passed so near her as to brush against her feathers, shrieking as it passed, 'He is close! We are los-s-s-t!'

Poor Beauty was in an agony of terror, she trembled in every limb, a cold perspiration broke out over her, and forgetting everything but the immediate danger, she turned her eyes away from Venus, and looked round to see what dreadful creature was chasing them, and how she could escape.

It was a strange and beautiful but terrible sight that met her gaze. Nearly every star in the heavens appeared to be leaving its place, and rushing wildly about. On each was standing a fairy, who would have been exquisitely lovely but for the wild scared look which disfigured their faces, and only at a short distance behind was the cause of their terror.

A fearful lion stood in the sky, fire issuing from his jaws, his eyes like live coals, his tail, with which he was lashing his sides, burning like a torch, while so gaunt and famine-stricken was he, that Beauty could see his heart through his ribs glowing like a furnace. He was in the very act of roaring and springing forward as she looked.

Happily for her, terror struck her dumb, and deprived her of all power of motion, for her fear was so overwhelming that she forgot Sylphina and her errand, Venus and Fairyland, and thought of nothing but how to save herself. The very extremity of her fear

closed her bill, and paralysed her limbs, so that she neither dropped the tear nor rushed wildly after the moving stars, as her first impulse prompted her to do. It was but a moment that she stopped thus arrested in her course, but that moment sufficed to show her that though the lion was prepared to spring, some invisible power kept him back. This gave her courage to collect her thoughts a little, and to consider what she had better do.

‘Where are all the stars rushing to?’ was her first inquiry, and she turned her head to look.

Another terrific object met her eyes. Upon her left hand, though fortunately at some distance from her, stood a fearful-looking bear. He too was glowing with supernatural fires; but he appeared well fed and sleek, not gaunt and hungry like the lion. He was looking tranquilly and rather curiously down at the terror-stricken fairies, one paw raised as if in readiness to seize his prey; and Beauty shuddered to see that each as they reached him disappeared in his terrible embrace. How thankful she felt that she had been unable to follow out her first impulse! But now what was she to do?

The whole heavens had changed their aspect. No longer gemmed with bright stars, lighting her on her way, but filled with horrible creatures, and wild savage-looking beasts. Near the bear was a dreadful dragon with forked tongue; and looking again behind her to

see if the lion was still restrained from springing upon her, she met the glowing eyes of a lynx. She gazed wildly round. Was there nowhere any road of safety? Yes, surely: Far off in the west, who was that giant hunter with his glittering belt, who, kneeling on one knee, held up aloft in his right hand a heavy club, and in his left a lion's skin? He would help her—he was powerful—he had slain one lion, he could slay these other fearful creatures. 'I will fly to him,' thought Beauty to herself, 'and ask his aid.' But even as the thought passed through her mind, she saw two of the stars rush to him, the terrified fairies holding out their hands for help. Each as they reached him instantly disappeared, and looking down at his feet, she perceived them sinking in a deep and rapid river into whose dark waters he had cast them.

Everywhere some fearful being stood in her path. And all were moving—moving slowly, and she became conscious that she herself was moving with them—moving downwards.

Presently a sad distant wail came faintly on her ear—the voice of the toad with its dismal croak! Och! Och!—Yes, she was sinking down to the earth again. The melancholy wail brought everything back to her mind—her desire to help Sylphina—the promise of the fairy that she should be a child again if she did—her long flight—her dangers and escapes—and now her utter, hopeless failure. She

looked up, and folding her wings, she whispered in the depths of her heart: 'Oh! Lily Fay, I cannot get to Fairyland; I can do nothing for myself, I am only a poor, weak little bird, do help me.'

What was it in the sky that made her open her wings again, and look up joyfully, and make an effort to fly once more?

Seated on a chair of light was a lovely lady, bearing in her hand a palm branch, with which she pointed upwards. She was looking down lovingly on the poor, faint-hearted, weary little bird, and unfastening the silver lining of her cloak, it floated softly down, and folding itself under Beauty's feet, it bore her up gently, past the great grim bear—past the fearful dragon—past the falling stars—far away from the hungry lion and the cruel giant—up into the clear calm sky, and there, shining bright as ever, was the beautiful Venus; hope and joy sprang up again in her heart, and such a deep humble gratitude that she longed for tears that she might show how grateful she felt. As the wish passed through her heart, the silver cloud melted beneath her feet, and such a warm soft shower fell upon the sorrowful toad, that again it was soothed into a peaceful sleep.

Presently the soft light of dawn began to break over the sky. One by one the stars disappeared. At last Venus itself grew dim and vanished, and where it had been there rose up before her the lovely

crystal gates, and beyond them Fairyland, tower and pinnacle and turret radiant with all the glorious colours of the rainbow.

She had no longer any need to use her wings. She seemed borne forwards by invisible powers, and as she approached nearer sweet sounds, as from a thousand Eolian harps, filled the air with melody. 'How must I get the gates opened?' she thought to herself. 'Will they open of themselves, or must I peck at them with my beak?' Nearer and nearer she approached, and she felt a little troubled, for still the gates kept shut, when all at once a lovely sight presented itself.

A group of beautiful fairies came dancing towards her, dressed in robes of rose colour, with their long golden hair floating around them. Holding hands they surrounded her in crescent form, and as they danced thus they sang :—

'Thou art come, thou art come,  
We have waited for thee long,  
And now we will greet thee  
With dance and with song.  
The bravest and the best,  
Our Queen thou shalt be,  
And carols the sweetest  
We will ever sing to thee.

'We have waited for thy coming,  
For many a weary day,  
And now with us, sweet Birdie,  
For ever thou must stay,

And through bright fields of space,  
Together we will play,  
No tyrant to restrain us,  
No rules we must obey.

'Outside the walls of Fairyland,  
No gates to shut us in,  
No Fairy Queen above us,  
No punishment or sin ;  
We'll frolic as we like,  
'Midst this celestial sheen,  
Join hands, sweet Beauty, with us,  
And come and be our Queen.'

But Beauty had learned her lesson. 'Through the gates! through the gates,' she thought to herself, and a fairy echo answered her thought—'Through the gates! through the gates.' Then the enraged fairies rushed towards her with flaming eyes and outstretched hands, singing in harsh tones—

'But we will have thee, Beauty,  
And stay thou must and shall,'  
Thus shrieked the angry fairies,  
Thus sang they one and all ;  
They each tore out a feather,  
They strove to break her wings,  
But Beauty flew straight onward,  
And in her heart she sings.

Straight through their ranks she fled,  
Nor fear nor trembling felt,  
And the fairy gates flew open,  
And the fairy wizards melt ;  
All in thin air they vanished,  
As through the gates she sped,  
And at the feet of the Fairy Queen  
The opal tear she laid.'

The victory was won—but at what a cost !

Every feather was torn from her once beautiful plumage, and as she placed the tear at the Fairy Queen's feet, she sunk down bleeding and lifeless.

The Queen rose, and smiling, touched her gently with her sceptre, while her maids of honour, led by Lily Fay, danced round her singing—

'Arouse thee; arouse thee,  
Thou brave little bird,  
Redeemed is thy promise,  
Thy petition is heard;  
And now for thy guerdon,  
Our Queen has declared,  
That henceforth thou shalt be  
A sweet Paradise bird.'

At the touch of the Queen's wand, Beauty revived and stood up. At first the blaze of light, and the triumphant song of so many voices, confused her, but she soon recovered herself, and looked up to the Queen.

She started back in amazement. Behind the Queen's throne was a large mirror, and she saw herself reflected in it—no longer torn and bloody—no longer dressed in the simple black and yellow feathers of a golden oriole, but decked in the gorgeous plumage of a bird of paradise.

In her amazement she quite forgot the presence she was in, and exclaimed in a delighted tone, 'How beautiful I am!'

The Fairy Queen laughed, and all her maids of honour laughed. Such a merry laugh, so long and so



loud, had not been heard in Fairyland for many a day ; so loud that the wicked Trolls shut up in Mount Vesuvius heard it, and roared, and spit out stones and ashes ; they were so wroth to hear the good fairies so happy.

‘Yes, you are beautiful, my little one,’ said the Queen, ‘and if you will, I will make you more beautiful still. Stay with me and you shall be a fairy. I will make you my first maid of honour, with Lily Fay for your companion. See, here is your dress, and your jewelled wreath all ready for you.’

One of the maids of honour held up a lovely robe of gold thread, and silk made of spun diamonds, and another displayed a wreath made of pearls and sapphires.

Beauty shook her head. ‘Great Queen,’ she said, ‘they are very lovely, and I should like to be a fairy for a little while, and always to have dear Lily Fay as a companion, but there is something I wish for more than all this.’ And she bent down before the feet of the Fairy Queen.

‘Speak out, Beauty,’ said the Queen ; ‘fear nothing. Whatever you ask me, I will grant. Be careful, therefore,’ she added, smiling, ‘to let your petition be a wise one.’

‘First for Sylphina,’ began Beauty ; but the Queen interrupted her. ‘I know your errand, and the generous forgiveness which has brought you here ; your

petition for Sylphina is granted, even to the restoration of her diamonds, and the receiving her at once as one of my maids of honour. But now for yourself ; ask what you will without fear,' and the Queen smiled more graciously than ever.

Now a difficulty occurred to Amy's mind. If she asked the Queen to make her a child again up there, how should she ever get down ? Or perhaps she would not be able to stay up ; she would be too heavy, and she would fall down, and down, and down, and break all her bones. She determined she would speak cautiously.

'You look thoughtful, beautiful bird of Paradise,' said the Queen ; 'speak out fearlessly.'

'I wish such a long wish,' said Beauty in a hesitating tone ; 'I cannot put it into a few words, and I am afraid you will think my wishes extravagant.'

'Let me hear them,' said the Queen, smiling ; 'my coffer is tolerably wide and deep, and for those who are good quite inexhaustible.'

Lily Fay held out her hand ; Beauty perched upon it, and looking up to the fairy Queen said—

'Do not be offended that I do not wish to be a fairy. I should indeed like to be one for a little while, that I might wear that lovely dress, and have one slide down a rainbow.'

The fairies laughed again, though they tried to suppress it, that they might not interrupt her.

'I should like to be a fairy always,' continued Beauty timidly, 'if it were not for one thing.'

'And what may that one thing be?' asked the Fairy Queen.

'I want to go up higher than even the fairies go, and so I want to be a child again, because some day children will be angels, and their wings will carry them higher than Fairyland, up to the golden gates of Paradise.'

'Ah yes!' said the Fairy Queen with a deep sigh, 'it is true; I am very sorry to lose you, but you have asked for the best gift. Lovely as we are, and powerful, we are weak and ugly in comparison to a little child. I have often seen the lovely little creatures, as their angels carried them, all dressed in spotless white, up to Paradise, far above us.'

'May I first fly back to Sylphina,' said Beauty, 'and carry your pardon to her, and then—'

'Then,' interrupted the Fairy Queen, 'you shall be a child again. But you must not leave us without taking with you some fairy gifts.'

Rising up, and waving her wand over her, she sang—

'Beautiful fairy, for a day and an hour;  
Beautiful bird, with a fairy's power;  
Back to thy mother, thou then shalt fly,  
Turn again to a child 'neath her loving eye;  
And all through thy life fairy gifts thou shalt have,  
The voice of a Syren, the eyes of a dove,  
And once in a year, on the first of May,  
Thou mayst see, if thou wilt, thy friend Lily Fay.'

As she finished, she laid the wand gently on her head, and immediately Beauty was changed, and stood amongst them the loveliest fairy of them all. The fairy children crowded round her and kissed her, and one bright-eyed little creature in particular took possession of her, and led her away to show her all the beauties of Fairyland. For the whole day she sported with them up and down the rainbows, riding on the rain-drops, and playing at hide-and-seek in cloud-land. And oh ! at sunset, the fun they had sliding down the sunbeams, and climbing up again over the golden cloud-hills. It was such a happy life, such glorious fun, that now and then a regret stole into Amy's mind that she had not chosen always to be a fairy.

She sat down on a soft fleecy cloud close by her to rest and think, and to bathe her hot face in its sparkling dew-drops. All her little companions had run off to watch the rising moon toss a cloud upon her horns, and Amy was alone.

'What a beautiful life this is,' she said aloud ; 'it is just like a lovely dream. I wonder whether it will continue ; or whether, if I wake up in Fairyland, it will be always beautiful ?'

She looked down ; the sun was nearly setting, and its crimson rays shone upon her robe till it looked like a large rich ruby. 'It is growing more beautiful than ever,' she exclaimed, starting up ; 'I will go in search of Lily Fay, and tell her that I have changed my mind.'

At that moment she heard a rustling in the air, and looking up saw in the distance a beautiful angel passing, bearing in his arms a little child with lovely upturned face, and she thought of the time when she too should be carried up by her angel far far beyond Fairyland, so she turned and slid quickly down the last sunbeam, and stood a bird of Paradise again on the topmost branch of the well-remembered lime-tree.

Lily Fay was there waiting for her. 'Sweet Beauty,' she said, 'I wish you had chosen to be a fairy, yet I know you have made the best choice. I have brought you Sylphina's diamonds, and when you wake her, your sweet voice will charm all the naughty spirit out of her. Here, too, is a gift from myself, that you may not forget me,' and she gave her a fairy prism. 'Whenever you wish to see Fairyland again, let the sun shine upon this, and whatever you look at will be turned into Fairyland, and will be painted with all the colours of the rainbow. Farewell Beauty.'

And Lily Fay disappeared with the last ray of the setting sun.

Beauty felt a little downcast when she was gone, but she remembered Sylphina, and knew she had no time to lose. She flew down at once to the foot of the tree.

'Sylphina!' she cried, as she touched the toad; 'wake up, you are forgiven. There are your diamonds, and the Fairy Queen will receive you at once as her maid of honour.'

‘Oh! how can I thank you?’ exclaimed Sylphina, as she started up a beautiful fairy child. ‘How can I ever thank you enough? How you must have suffered! Such black clouds, such thunder and lightning came after you were gone, that I thought you must be lost. And you have come back safely, —but oh! how beautiful you have grown!’ she exclaimed, gazing at her with astonishment. ‘Why, there is nothing more beautiful in all Fairyland. You have chosen to be a fairy after all. Oh! I am so glad!’ And she clapped her hands.

‘No, I have not,’ said Beauty; ‘I was a fairy for one day, and it was very lovely, but I have chosen to be a child again; and look, Sylphina, what Lily Fay has given me, I can always see Fairyland when I wish.’

‘Amy, Amy,’ called her mother’s voice, ‘where are you?’

‘Here I am, mother,’ replied Amy, and she started up so violently that the prism fell from her hands with a crash that sounded loud in her ears, as it broke into a thousand pieces.

At the same moment some one seized her by the arm.

‘Deary me! Miss Amy, who ever would have thought now of your going to sleep out here all in the sun? Why, it’s enough to give you a sunstroke.’

'Oh, nurse! I've lost my *prism*,' said Amy, sitting up and looking round her with a bewildered air.

'Lost your prison, Miss Amy! why, you've never been in prison, and are never like to be, that I know of.'

'I didn't say *prison*, nurse. I've lost my *prism* that the fairy gave me.'

'Bless me! if the child isn't dreaming still. How your little head be ever running after fairies, and such like uncanny things, but—goodness gracious! just look at your frock! a clean frock this very morning! what ever will your mamma say?'

'Well, my little girl, have you finished gathering your strawberries?' said her mother, coming up at that moment.

'Oh, mamma! said Amy in a piteous tone; 'I meant to finish them, but I went to sleep, and I laid down upon them, and I've spoiled my frock; and—Oh! I've had such a wonderful dream.'

And the poor little child laid her head on her mother's arm, and burst into tears.

'Never mind, my darling,' said her mother, kissing her; 'go in with nurse and have your frock changed. Hubert and I will finish picking the strawberries. You have arranged these in the basket beautifully. After dinner we are going into the woods, and then you shall tell us your wonderful dream.'



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